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ABSTRACT

The framework presented here is intended to provide general guidance in the design of curricula for teaching introductory Japanese to English-speaking students at the high school and college levels. It is not a course syllabus or statement of specific instructional outcomes. It has three purposes: (1) to assist Japanese language teachers in planning curricula for their individual programs and teaching; (2) to inform administrators about possible program formats; and (3) to advise parents and students, through administrators, of reasonable expectations for high school Japanese programs. An introductory section provide background information, explains romanization conventions and key terminology, and outlines ten basic assumptions underlying the curriculum framework. The framework itself is presented in four chapters, each treating a different concern in teaching Japanese in the United States: criteria for setting program goals and assessing student progress; strategies for presentation and sequencing of linguistic elements; the writing system; and class activities for helping students achieve communicative competence. A concluding section summarizes key points of the framework of particular importance to administrators. A brief bibliography and index are appended. (MSE)

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National Foreign Language Center

A Framework for Introductory Japanese Language Curricula in American High Schools and Colleges

This NFLC publication is the result of a two-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.
It was prepared by members of the project task force:
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1993

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FOREWORD

This document is part of the National Foreign Language Center's special effort to enhance Japanese language instruction in the United States. That effort included a detailed survey of instruction in Japanese, which serves as the backdrop for this framework. In the next stage the National Foreign Language Center, in collaboration with the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, intends to develop an equivalent framework for intermediate and advanced Japanese. Similar efforts, involving comprehensive stocktaking surveys followed by the specification of language learning frameworks, are under way in Chinese and Russian.

This project for introductory Japanese was carried out in collaboration with the College Board and Educational Testing Service, which developed a standardized achievement test in Japanese to accompany this document. The framework portion of the project, for which I served as director, is an attempt to assist the emergence of consensus on the pedagogical principles and practices that might best inform the design and management of introductory Japanese language instruction.

Such a framework can lay a foundation for subsequent efforts in curriculum and syllabus design, teacher training, the development of instructional materials, the uses of instructional technologies, the development of new assessment tools, and ultimately the agenda for second language acquisition research in specific language fields.

For this project, every effort was made to involve a diverse range of Japanese language specialists from both secondary and higher education institutions around the country. Our intent was to construct a framework that would be both hospitable and useful to Japanese language programs in the United States operating under varying local conditions and constraints, and often differing dramatically as to available resources, both human and financial.

We have learned that building consensus toward pedagogical assumptions is an arduous but rewarding task that is necessary if the product is to reflect the best thinking in the field. It is our fervent hope that this endeavor will promote and assist the learning and teaching of Japanese in the years to come.

A. Ronald Walton

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Such a collaborative project, involving both the National Foreign Language Center and the College Board, owes much to many people. The achievement of the project goals was the responsibility of the project co-directors, A. Ronald Walton, Deputy Director of the National Foreign Language Center, and Gretchen W. Rigol, Executive Director of Admission and Guidance Services, the College Board; Christine A. Morfit, Program Officer, the National Foreign Language Center; and Brian O'Reilly, Associate Director of the Admission Testing Program, the College Board.

We are grateful for the assistance of Eleanor H. Jorden, senior project consultant, who throughout the project gave us the benefit of her many years of experience.

Members of the advisory board met twice to discuss broad policy questions, and provided many suggestions and much valuable advice throughout the project. We extend sincere thanks for their participation to all board members: Hiroshi Miyaji (Chair), Clifford B. Darnall, Teruko Kusama, Norman Masuda, Tim Mathos, David O. Mills, Jean C. Morden, Yoko Pusavat, S. Robert Ramsey, Masatoshi Shimano, Robert J. Sukle, and Masakazu Watabe. We also wish to thank Ronald Herring and the staff of the Institute for International Studies at Stanford University, who hosted the first meeting of the task force and advisory board. Invited speakers attending the first meeting included Richard D. Brecht of the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages; Mariette Reed of Educational Testing Service; David Arlington, Oregon State Foreign Language Supervisor; Anita Bruce, Hawaii State Foreign Language

Supervisor; Fred Dobb, Foreign Language Consultant for the California State Department of Education; and Nancy Motomatsu, Washington State International Education Supervisor.

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Stacey Simmons and Muliani Lyng of the National Foreign Language Center staff assisted with project administration. We wish to thank Mary V. Yates, National Foreign Language Center editor, for her work in editing this document.

Sole responsibility for the views expressed here, however, rests with the four task force members.

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About This Document

The increasing demand for Japanese language instruction in the United States over the past several years has resulted in a rapid expansion in the number of Japanese programs at the high school level. This has allowed considerable innovation in program design and implementation—a process of experimentation that highlights the emerging national need to support and improve Japanese language instruction.

Role of the framework

This framework has been designed to inform all those interested in establishing or maintaining Japanese programs at both the high school and college levels. It takes into account lessons learned from past experience and lays out a number of basic considerations to guide administrators and teachers who are searching for a coherent rationale upon which to base program decisions.

Teachers typically desire a detailed syllabus for their courses—what to do on the first Monday morning and every schoolday thereafter; many administrators at the district and state level are interested in developing the kind of curricular guidelines that would put Japanese on an administrative par with more commonly taught languages such as French and Spanish.

This document, however, is intended neither as a national course syllabus nor as a statement of specific instructional outcomes such as those characterized by proficiency testing guidelines. Rather, it seeks to explore a number of much more basic considerations about the teaching and learning of Japanese. It does not adhere to or advocate any particular foreign language teaching methodology or approach.

The intent of this document is to provide general guidance in the design of curricula for teaching Japanese at the introductory level to English-speaking students in the United States.*

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* We recognize that in certain parts of the country English is not the first language of an increasingly large number of students. The discussion will assume near-native knowledge of English on the part of these students.

Audience

This framework is aimed at two overlapping audiences: (1) teachers and administrators in high schools and colleges, and (2) schools and institutions considering establishing Japanese language programs.

Special attention has been paid to high school programs because this is a new and developing sector in Japanese language instruction.

Purpose

This framework has been prepared with three specific purposes in mind: (1) to assist teachers engaged in the teaching of Japanese in planning curricula for their individual programs and teaching; (2) to inform administrators about possible program formats; and (3) to advise parents and students—through administrators and teachers—of reasonable expectations for Japanese programs in high schools.

Overview

The body of this document is divided into three parts: an introductory section, the framework itself, and an executive summary.

The remainder of this introduction explains the romanization conventions and key terminology used throughout the document, and outlines ten basic assumptions that underlie the framework. For the most part, the assumptions are general statements relating to the cognitive and behavioral activities of all foreign language learners, but some specific implications for and examples from Japanese are also introduced.

The framework is divided into four chapters, each one treating a different concern in the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language in the United States. It represents a first step in the ongoing process of development of Japanese language instruction. Chapter 1 discusses the selection of criteria that should be used in setting program goals and assessing the learner's progress toward them. Chapter 2 deals with strategies for the presentation and sequencing of linguistic elements in the program. The writing system is a special concern of teachers of Japanese because of its particular complexity, and it is therefore discussed separately, in Chapter 3. Chapter 4, "Activities in the Classroom," suggests how teachers can help students achieve communicative competence in Japanese. The suggestions are general so that teachers can use them flexibly when formulating

day-to-day activities; the chapter concludes with remarks on teacher certification and long-term planning for classroom environments that are conducive to the learning of Japanese.

Some issues are approached from different perspectives in the various chapters. This repetition is necessary, given the complexity of Japanese language instruction.

The last section of this document, the executive summary, outlines the key points of the framework that are of particular importance to administrators.

CONVENTIONS FOR ROMANIZATION

The Japanese words and phrases that occur in this document are romanized using the system found in the most recent edition of the Kenkyūsha *Japanese-English Dictionary.*[*] The following table lists alternative romanizations for certain strings of letters with which some readers may be more familiar.

What appears in this system as	*Elsewhere may appear as*
g	$\bar{g}$
shi	si
sha, shu, sho	sya, syu, syo
ji	zi, di
ja, ju, jo	zya, zyu, zyo, dya, dyu, dyo
chi	ti
cha, chu, cho	tya, tyu, tyo
tsu	tu
zu	du, dzu
fu	hu
o	wo
n	$\bar{n}$
n'a, n'i, n'u, n'e, n'o	$\bar{n}$a, $\bar{n}$i, $\bar{n}$u, $\bar{n}$e, $\bar{n}$o
n'ya, n'yu, n'yo	$\bar{n}$ya, $\bar{n}$yu, $\bar{n}$yo
nm, nb, np	mm, mb, mp, $\bar{n}$m, $\bar{n}$b, $\bar{n}$p
$\bar{a}$	aa, â, a
ii	ī, î
$\bar{u}$	uu, û, u
e	ye
ei, $\bar{e}$	ee, ê, e
$\bar{o}$	oo, ô, oh, o

[*] However, accent marks are omitted. There are a number of ways of indicating accent in Japanese, but these are beyond the scope of this document.

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Certain fundamental terms and distinctions appear repeatedly throughout this document.

Target vs. base

TARGET LANGUAGE refers to the foreign language a student is learning; in most cases this will be Japanese. BASE LANGUAGE refers to the native language of the student.

By extension, TARGET NATIVE means a native speaker of the target language, and BASE NATIVE means a native speaker of the base language. Likewise, TARGET CULTURE and BASE CULTURE refer, respectively, to the cultures of the target- and base-language communities; in our case these will usually be Japanese and American society.

Authenticity

AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE, in this document, refers to speech or writing that might be used by native speakers in their ordinary social interactions. Speech or text that is identifiable as having been created specifically for or by foreign learners is, according to this definition, not authentic.

Dialogues created for a textbook are considered acceptable only if they cannot be distinguished linguistically from a transcription of what native Japanese would actually say in a given situation. Similarly, samples of Japanese writing that are created for textbooks should not be constructed in such a way that an educated Japanese would find them linguistically peculiar. For example, virtually every native Japanese would find the following exchange abnormal: **Anata wa sensei desu ka** 'Are you a teacher?' **Hai, watakushi wa sensei desu** 'Yes, I am a teacher'. Under our definition it would not be authentic, in speech or writing, and should not be taught. Recorded speech or texts produced by native Japanese for native Japanese will be referred to as artifacts.

Acquired vs. learned

In the process of growing up, children gain competence in the spoken language of their society outside of awareness. We refer to this unconscious process as LANGUAGE ACQUISITION. The acquiring child usually knows no other language, is surrounded by native speakers of the language, is not under any time pressure, and becomes proficient without following any formal curriculum. By contrast, the process of consciously studying a foreign language involves LANGUAGE LEARNING. Language acquisition and language learning are very different: language learners already know another language (or other languages), are strongly affected by the linguistic code of their native language as they learn the new language, aim at reaching their learning goals as rapidly as possible, and are helped by proceeding according to a structured curriculum.

It is useful to extend the acquired-vs.-learned distinction to culture.* ACQUIRED CULTURE refers to the system by which natives of a given society interact and interrelate. Like acquired language, acquired culture is gained unconsciously, during the process of socialization. Acquired culture determines, for example, how members of a society regard the individual and define the self, their system of logic (linear vs. holistic), their attitudes toward time and space, and their definition of their own society within the world at large. It is the driving force that affects every facet of behavior. Our acquired culture is so completely outside of our awareness that we are apt to think of it as ordinary human behavior; when a foreigner's behavior is different, we tend to regard it as "strange."

For example, as Japanese children grow up, they acquire the rules of a system that overtly shows differences of rank (vertical or hierarchical differences) and the distinctions between in-group vs. out-group membership in virtually all interactions. This includes, of course, linguistic interaction. Japanese has no stylistically neutral language. Every utterance reflects who is speaking to whom, others who may be present, the setting of the occurrence, the linguistic and nonlinguistic context, and so on. In English an utterance like "I'll be here at 9:00 tomorrow morning" is appropriate for anyone to use in speaking to anyone; in Japanese there is no single equivalent that is similarly appropriate for general use. For a native speaker of English to ignore this feature when teaching Japanese, on the grounds that it is not important in English, would be as indefensible as

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* Jorden and Lambert 1991, 4–5.

teaching English to Japanese without distinguishing between singular and plural forms of nouns just because there is no comparable feature in Japanese.

There is another kind of culture that requires conscious study (and/or imitation) by everyone, whether born into a society or a newcomer to it. This is LEARNED CULTURE; it embraces aesthetic culture (like the creation and study of literature, art, and music), informational culture (facts about the society, its history, geography, economy, and so on), and skill culture (how to do things like wrap a package, make *sushi*, or use chopsticks). It is hard to imagine a student of Japanese who does not develop an interest in some kind of learned culture, but it is important to note that study of learned culture does not in itself improve language competence. On the other hand, foreigners interested in becoming proficient in the Japanese language must become consciously aware of the acquired culture of Japanese society. For this reason, throughout this document we emphasize the need to teach language IN (acquired) culture rather than language AND (learned) culture in the language classroom.

Reading vs. decoding

Because of the complexity of the Japanese writing system, reading occupies a central position in much of the discussion that follows. Fluent READING occurs only when (1) the reader already knows in advance the form and meaning of nearly all the words and grammatical patterns used in the text, and (2) can read aloud or subvocalize the text, using that knowledge without conscious effort.

We distinguish reading from DECODING, the attempt to interpret written Japanese in English directly, without reference to the forms of the Japanese language actually represented by the script. Note carefully that decoding in this sense means not the "sounding out" of written characters, but rather the attempt to avoid associating written symbols with stretches of speech in the target language.

Achievement tests vs. proficiency tests

An ACHIEVEMENT TEST in a foreign language is closely connected with an instructional program; it measures the extent to which a student has learned precisely what has been taught. Each student's performance is compared with that of an imaginary learner who has mastered, at each step in the process, everything included in the curriculum.

PROFICIENCY TESTING measures a student's ability with no assumptions as to how that ability has been attained. It does not matter whether the student has ever had any formal instruction. The student's performance is measured against that of a native speaker, usually an educated native speaker, with no assumption of a fixed curriculum as the basis of the testing.

It is important to recognize that the achievement-vs.-proficiency distinction is both historically and conceptually grounded in the area of testing. The merits of purposely modifying a course of study so as to prepare students for a proficiency test—as opposed to an achievement test—are debatable and certainly not implicit in the original motivation behind the development of proficiency tests.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Ten assumptions about the teaching of any foreign language underlie the recommendations in Chapters 1 through 4 below.

I. Language is a system.

A language is not a mere collection of words, phrases, and cultural facts of equal importance, but a complex structure of behaviors dictated by conventions, including how speech-sounds are combined to form words, words to form phrases and sentences, and sentences to form discourse that is both socially appropriate and culturally meaningful. Learning to use a language requires learning a pattern of behavior, and this in turn requires learning a skill.

The ability to use language to fulfill communicative needs cannot be achieved through the rote memorization of isolated utterances or facts. Although children acquire their first language by "picking up" the language they hear around them, such a process takes an enormous amount of time—some three thousand to five thousand hours of contact. Students who embark on learning a foreign language already know at least one language and are usually literate in it; they do not have the time nor are they able to "pick up" language as they did when they acquired their first language. In fact, their knowledge of the first language interferes with their learning of the foreign language, particularly when that foreign language is unrelated linguistically or culturally. They do, however, have cognitive skills and analytical abilities that facilitate rapid learning. A foreign language should therefore be presented to them in an orderly way that reflects the multilevel structure of the language system.

It is worth adding that young base-native children entering elementary school do not have the analytical and cognitive abilities that older students have. Thus, the task of teaching Japanese at this level requires a thoroughly different approach. It is not enough to deliver the curriculum through Japanese.

Because of the complexity of any language, not everything can be presented explicitly. Foreign language learning is indeed a lifelong endeavor. It is crucial that the most useful aspects of the language be emphasized. These include both linguistic knowledge and culturally appropriate forms of behavior, prac-

ticed until the students can use them without premeditation. In addition, students must be taught the skills necessary for them to continue to learn and acquire the language on their own.

II. Speech is primary.

In English, Japanese, or any other language, the sense of a series of words is unaffected by how, or whether, the series is written down. Research on reading shows that subvocalization occurs in the ordinary reading of all languages, including Japanese.* The fact that children normally learn to understand and produce speech before acquiring the skills of literacy shows that literacy is not necessary for normal language acquisition. In fact, most of the world's languages have no traditional writing system at all.

Speech—that is, listening and speaking—is thus primary. For students who study Japanese for only two to four years, it is important that they acquire skills that are useful in communicating with speakers of the language. For those who study longer—we know that most students who take Japanese in high school go on to college, where a majority of them continue to take Japanese—a solid foundation in speaking is the best insurance that they will make steady progress in reading. In both cases the priorities are the same: both kinds of students are well served as long as reading follows speaking in the curricular structure.

III. A foreign language is not a translation of one's native language.

Despite the basic needs and desires shared by all human beings, languages differ greatly in their linguistic structure and in the ways they are used in given situations. The greater the cultural distance, the more likely that literal translation will result in misunderstanding and a breakdown of communication.

When teaching German or Spanish to American students, for example, one can safely assume that many foreign grammatical distinctions (such as singular vs. plural) and word classes (such as articles) can be explained using similar features within English grammar; that most cognate lexical items (words that come from the same historical source) will have the same or nearly the same meanings in the base and target languages; and that basic concepts about social

* See, for example, Horodeck 1987.

institutions and interpersonal relations will largely carry over from the American to the target-language environment. For Japanese, none of these assumptions is valid.

For example, the Japanese phrase **nomitai desu ka**, a direct translation of the English "Do you want [something] to drink?" is not an invitation in Japanese and is socially inappropriate even though it is syntactically possible. Teaching the structural pattern is not enough; as soon as sentences of this type are introduced, the teacher must take time to explain how they are used in Japanese discourse. Letting students extrapolate from English usage without correction is the same things as providing false information. (See Assumption V below.)

IV. Reading in a foreign language is not the same as decoding.

To read a text fluently, you have to know the language in it. Because the visual image of Japanese script seems to many people to be the most striking feature connected with the language, there is a tendency to emphasize the script at the expense of the spoken language. This merely encourages decoding.

Japanese children are guaranteed access to the structures of their own language by the time they begin learning to read. Students of Japanese as a foreign language, on the other hand, will not have that access unless their teachers ensure that they have acquired a fair degree of mastery of the spoken forms they are attempting to read. Furthermore, Japanese children are in a position to acquire new vocabulary through reading because they are already conversant with the structures of the language; for students of Japanese as a foreign language, by contrast, syntax and morphology are just as new as vocabulary.

To repeat, it is up to teachers to see to it that students have adequate preparation, in terms of spoken language, before they tackle reading.

V. Misinformation is counterproductive.

It is not wise to ask students to learn facts or skills they will later discover are not part of real-life language usage. It is more difficult to break old habits than to acquire new ones. Students should from the outset use only the accepted forms that educated Japanese normally use. The models of language they are exposed to should be authentic. Teachers should, of course, help students cope with complications and irregularities, but they must never alter the facts of the language for the sake of simplicity.

Introducing **anata** simply as a substitute for the English pronoun "you" is a typical example of what can go wrong. In the overwhelming majority of sentences in which the English pronoun must be used, the corresponding Japanese sentence not only does not have **anata** but often lacks a simple translation-equivalent entirely. **Anata** carries socially significant connotations and therefore must be used carefully.

More generally, there is no point in teaching students to conduct an American conversation using Japanese words; rather, the ways in which native speakers of Japanese interact with one another need to be taught. For example, postponing the answer to a question by first "echoing" the question, often in a shortened form, is very common in Japanese conversational style; if this discourse pattern is not taught early on, students may incorrectly assume that an unprepared response carries the same degree of acceptability in Japanese as it does in English.

Instruction must center on authentic language; the curriculum should utilize authentic materials but, at the same time, not overburden students with unfamiliar words and structures.

VI. Style matters.

Despite the large common ground shared by spoken and written language, special attention must be paid to the lexical and grammatical structures they do not share. The rift between the styles of spoken Japanese (SJ) and written Japanese (WJ) is extraordinarily large.

For example, the negative of **X da** '[Something] is X' in SJ is normally **X ja nai** '[Something] isn't X'; **X de wa nai** '[Something] isn't X' also occurs in careful speech, and both **X de nai** and **X de mo nai** (which mean something different from **de wa nai = ja nai**) are used where sense demands. Affirmative forms like **de wa aru**, **de mo aru**, and **de aru** are typically confined to WJ, and the first two are far less frequent than the last. Furthermore, the distribution of **de aru** in WJ is somewhat different from the distribution of **da** in SJ.

To take another example, **ima** and **genzai**, both 'now', 'the present', are virtually synonymous, but the former is strongly preferred in SJ, since it is a commonly used colloquial expression; the latter is more frequent in WJ and in learned discussions.

Although there are genres of SJ—such as the language used in television advertisements aimed at large, unidentified groups of people—that lack many

of the features of normal conversational language, WJ and SJ are generally quite distinct. It is therefore not particularly useful to teach WJ that is merely a transcription of SJ or vice versa.

VII. Learning a skill requires practice.

We learn to hear by hearing, to speak by speaking, to interact by interacting. It is unreasonable to expect students to learn how to use the Japanese language without giving them ample opportunity to practice doing so. Consequently, the aspects of the language being learned must be practiced, with the student moving on only after having attained a significant level of mastery.

At the same time, it should never be assumed that once such a level of mastery has been attained, it will be maintained forever. All through the process of learning the language, concepts, linguistic structures, and idioms will need to be revisited many times in a spiraling fashion.

Although foreign language learning at the introductory level has a cognitive component that deals essentially with information about the language, it also involves obtaining and using skills. It is in many ways more like learning how to play a musical instrument, to play a dramatic role, or to play a sport than like memorizing purely factual information such as formulae or dates. Teachers need to provide models and students need to emulate the model behavior actively. Through ongoing practice, the model becomes a controlled, functional part of their behavior, and students can apply it in new circumstances.

VIII. Instruction is best focused on the learner.

Focusing on the learner means guiding students in acquiring optimal strategies for engaging and exploring the language. Guidance by the teacher is essential, because there is simply no way for an American student to predict how a Japanese would handle a given situation communicatively—the base and target cultures are different in ways that must be taught. More specifically, the teacher's responsibility includes sequencing the material, setting an appropriate pace, and providing individual attention to students as necessary. Building motivation is also an important task, but one that must be accomplished within the context of the predefined goals of the course. Although students vary in the degree of inborn talent they bring to the learning process, learning styles are to a great extent

themselves learned; teachers need to give students a sense of confidence in the methods used to introduce and practice new material.

As a practical matter, developing and maintaining a high level of motivation among students can be crucial to the continuation of a language program, but in the end, awareness of personal accomplishment is the greatest motivator of all, and it is up to the teacher, not the students, to define the yardstick by which accomplishment is measured.

IX. The target culture is delivered through the base culture.

Although, as remarked earlier, it is essential to teach the target language IN culture, the classroom environment itself needs to acknowledge the values of the base culture of the students.

It cannot reasonably be expected that American high school or college students will have a value system similar to that of their Japanese counterparts. This is particularly important for native Japanese teachers who have not undergone American secondary education themselves. The attitudes of American students toward studying and toward their teachers are likely to be quite different from the attitudes of their Japanese peers. The instructor must understand these differences and help the American students understand them without threatening their sense of cultural identity.

For example, American students may compliment their teacher's performance by saying something like "You gave us a really good class today," but a Japanese would consider such praise insulting. This is because teachers, who are among the most highly regarded individuals in Japanese society, are expected to be good all the time. Affirmation from their students is culturally inappropriate. When, therefore, an American student tries to compliment a teacher in Japanese, the teacher needs to respond at two levels: calling attention to what is wrong with such verbal behavior in Japanese while acknowledging the student's message in terms of the base culture. It would be unwise either to ignore the student's intention or to pretend that he or she had made no error in using Japanese.

The purpose of learning Japanese is not to become Japanese, but rather to become an informed foreigner who can function in Japanese society in a way that does not make Japanese feel uncomfortable or otherwise impedes the attainment of practical goals, whether in work or in everyday affairs.

X. A good curriculum takes well-defined goals and local conditions into account.

"Curriculum," in this context, applies not to a course or a set of unrelated courses but to an integrated, cohesive program with identified goals. A language program should be supported by separate courses dealing with cultural information. Establishing program goals, working toward creating an academic infrastructure to complement language offerings, and ensuring that Japanese is an integral part of a school's overall academic program must precede the actual establishment of the Japanese language program.

Such goals cannot be set unless there is a clear sense of the students' needs, abilities, and level of commitment; other local conditions, such as facilities, equipment, and the availability of appropriately trained teachers, must also be considered fully. It is important to be aware of the extent to which a curriculum can be compromised by inadequate local conditions. There is a point beyond which the often-heard statement "Doing a little is better than doing nothing at all" ceases to hold true.

CHAPTER 1
GOALS AND EVALUATION

Unless a curriculum is grounded in well-defined goals, it will be virtually impossible to carry out meaningful evaluations either of students' progress or of the program as a whole. Testing and goals are inextricably related.

1. Set realistic goals.

1.1 Trade-offs are inevitable.

Accurate, socially appropriate use of the Japanese language in a wide variety of circumstances is a skill that takes many years of concentrated study to attain. There is a limit to how much even the best-supported high school or college program can achieve. In any case, students take many classes other than Japanese.

Given these constraints on curriculum design, teachers and administrators need to bear in mind that every decision to devote an hour of classroom work to some related area that is not specifically language study means an hour taken away from language practice. Time taken to discuss Japanese literature in English, for example, is time not available for actual language training.

Furthermore, survey data collected from students in precollegiate, postsecondary, and proprietary schools throughout the United States show that students of Japanese have clear preferences and characteristic personal goals: more than 90 percent of all students of Japanese in high school intend to go to college, and more than half of them expect to take more Japanese when they get there. And in all categories of schools, the one thing students say they want to learn how to do, more than anything else, is to converse with native speakers of Japanese in a vocationally useful way.*

Although specific definitions of goals will vary from place to place in accordance with the resources available to the school system and the character of the student body, it is wise to focus primarily on spoken language skills first.

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* See Jorden and Lambert 1991.

1.2 Mastery of Japanese is a lifelong task.

Even at the college level, it is difficult to impart vocationally useful levels of Japanese competence within the constraints of the typical degree program. High school programs too should take the concept of lifelong learning seriously; students should be advised explicitly, at the outset, that they are embarking upon a path that will take them beyond high school graduation if they expect to be able to make effective occupational use of the Japanese language.

1.3 Distinguish goals from nongoals.

It is common sense to break a complex task down into relatively easy modules that can be treated individually, but there is a limit to how far one can push this strategy when it comes to foreign language learning. The interconnections between language and culture are numerous and self-reinforcing. Although certain subtasks—for example, the writing of Japanese script—are naturally identifiable, much language performance cannot be divided into neat chunks.

Care must be taken not to set nongoals—objectives so overly narrow as to be isolated from the overall task of learning to use Japanese effectively with native speakers. A typical nongoal is the rote memorization of a certain number of Chinese characters (*kanji*) without regard for their use in actual Japanese texts. (See Chapter 3.)

In this regard it is particularly important to understand the proper use of proficiency guidelines. The distinction between PROFICIENCY and ACHIEVEMENT was made originally in the field of testing. As proficiency testing became more popular, the benchmarks or milestones that defined levels of proficiency were reinterpreted by curriculum developers following a "teach to the test" strategy. Unfortunately, this approach can easily lead to paradoxes: "novice"-level students may not be expected to attain native-like pronunciation, for example, but no one would seriously want to make poor pronunciation a goal for students aspiring to become "novice" speakers.

Another characteristic of low-level proficiency in a foreign language is excessive emphasis on many distinct vocabulary items and relatively little emphasis on grammatical patterns. Such unbalanced knowledge is typical of people with no formal training in the language who have had to spend some time in the country. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to dwell upon vocabulary at the expense of grammar in the belief that this will enable beginning students to score higher on proficiency tests.

In short, setting realistic goals requires focusing on the forest and not the individual trees. The overall objective of accurate, socially appropriate spoken language competence must inform all other, more specific choices of goals. Stated simply: teach what is meaningful, and then test what you teach—do not teach to the test.

1.4 Do not expect Japanese to be "just another foreign language."

Administrators as well as teachers must be particularly alert to the unique features of Japanese as a subject of study for American students. Not only is Japanese one of the most linguistically difficult languages for native speakers of English to master, it is also used in a cultural setting radically different from anything found in American society.

The kinds of measures traditionally used in evaluating achievement in European languages therefore need to be adjusted when carried over to the case of Japanese. Reading the equivalent of a play by Molière or a novella by Goethe is simply not a realistic goal for high school study of Japanese—it is an ambitious goal even for college undergraduates—because mastery of the necessary aspects of the writing system, let alone the special vocabulary and grammar of literary language, requires a thorough knowledge of the basic structure of everyday, colloquial speech and its cultural setting. Without supporting courses in Japanese history and civilization, for example, interpretation of novels like *The Golden Pavilion* (Mishima) and *Snow Country* (Kawabata) will be unnecessarily difficult.

2. Have a realistic purpose for testing.

The ultimate test of a program occurs when students have the opportunity to use what they have learned to interact with Japanese in Japanese society. Learners who are unable to engage in such interactions have evidently failed to learn how to use the language in its cultural context. If they have received high marks on tests along the way, the discrepancy must be due either to a failure to define the goals of the program clearly, or to a failure to design tests to measure progress toward those goals.

Assuming that specific goals have been clearly defined, it is therefore essential that each test have a clear purpose. Otherwise, results of assessment will be of little use in estimating the degree of success the learners will have in the field; moreover, a poorly designed test without a clear purpose cannot provide

much useful diagnostic information or have much positive effect on student motivation.

There are several specific reasons for administering tests depending on what the teacher intends to do with the results. They may be used to (1) inform students of their progress in the program and predict their future success in the field; (2) diagnose and make students aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses; (3) assign grades; (4) adjust the pace of instruction; (5) modify instructional procedures; and (6) place students at suitable levels in the curriculum.* From the point of view of the students, test results are meaningful if they tell them (1) what they have learned or missed and how this will affect their ultimate success in the field; (2) what areas need more work; (3) what grades they can expect; and (4) the level or class in which they can expect placement.

2.1 Use proficiency tests for interprogram comparisons.

A central recommendation of this framework is to emphasize spoken language competence from the beginning; for that reason it may seem at first that proficiency testing is more suitable than achievement testing as an assessment technique because it compares the learner with a native speaker and thus simulates a "test in the field." There are, however, three serious drawbacks to using proficiency testing in language programs, especially at the introductory level: (1) the unavoidable mismatch between what is being tested (a real-life activity) and the specific content taught up to a certain point (an intermediate level of achievement); (2) the extreme difficulty of differentiating levels of ability at beginning stages of language learning; and (3) the implausibility of equating the description of outcomes used in proficiency-test rankings with the instructional goals of a school curriculum.

Because proficiency tests, unlike achievement tests, do not assume a definite course of learning, they cannot be used to determine what students have learned as a result of a particular curriculum, or to place a student at a particular point in an existing sequence of courses.

The United States Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) developed the first set of proficiency tests in foreign languages used in this country. The FSI scale of 0 to 5 covers a wide range of abilities, from no

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* There may be other purely pragmatic reasons for giving a test, such as to keep students busy when the teacher is away, or to improve students' attendance record. These are not considered in the present discussion.

recognizable facility to that of an educated native speaker. The scale devised by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), ranging from Novice-Low to Superior, aims at a finer gradation of levels corresponding to FSI levels 0 through 3. Unfortunately, this refinement of the scale, which may be useful when dealing with languages cognate to English, does not work very well in the case of Japanese.* Students at the end of one year of college study of Japanese are just as likely to attain a rating of Novice-High on an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) as students at the end of their second year. The scale does not differentiate beginning students of Japanese sufficiently to serve as a useful assessment tool at this level, but finer division of the scale would require the rating specifications to be too instruction-specific for a proficiency test.

Furthermore, the different rating specifications used in proficiency tests such as the ACTFL OPI scale typically describe levels of outcomes of classroom or life experience (e.g., "Can converse on already familiar topics but not on new topics introduced by the interlocutor"). Such pragmatically defined outcomes only rarely correspond to the mastery of content covered by a particular course of study in terms of its stated goals. Not all students learn to the same degree even if they receive exactly the same instruction, and most learners do not learn everything that has been taught. The use of proficiency testing therefore runs the risk of creating confusion as to the goals of the course, which will likely be quite different from the outcomes measured by a proficiency test.

Proficiency testing can, of course, be useful in comparing programs having different goals and instructional methodologies, but it is not a useful tool for assessment within a single program.

2.2 Use achievement tests for intraprogram assessment.

Achievement tests rather than proficiency tests are useful for most purposes of intraprogram testing, especially at elementary levels. Because of its necessary connection to instructional content, achievement testing is free from the kind of problems associated with proficiency tests, although it naturally has its own potential drawbacks. The biggest risk in using an achievement test is that it may require students to engage in tasks that have no relevance or resemblance to what they are likely to encounter outside the classroom. A test based on such unrealistic tasks fails to assess the students' likely level of success when they interact with Japanese outside the classroom.

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* See Wetzel 1989.

3. When possible, aim for "prochievement" testing.

There are drawbacks to using proficiency tests within a language program, but a bad achievement test is no better. What is needed is a blend of the two testing techniques, what may be called a "prochievement" (proficiency/achievement) test. Prochievement testing combines the content-specificity of the achievement test with the format of the proficiency test. There are several key characteristics that a prochievement test must have to be truly useful.

3.1 Make the test follow program goals.

The goals of the program must be determined before the students' learning can be evaluated. If the goal includes oral communication, then both speaking and listening must be part of the testing. Generally speaking, program goals need to overlap with what the students will need to do "in the field."

3.2 Include realistic tasks when possible.

If the results of testing are to give any indication of how students will perform in real interactional situations, it should include tasks that are realistic.

For speaking, realistic tasks include:

— acting a role, given necessary knowledge of contextual circumstances, including the real or assumed relationship among all conversational participants; students may initiate or react to conversation and may comment on what they observe (MULTI-SKILL TESTING)

— delivering a prepared speech (e.g., a self-introduction, a speech at a wedding), given clear knowledge of the circumstances of the speech and the nature of the audience (SINGLE-SKILL TESTING)

For both tasks, students' speech or interactions may be evaluated according to such criteria as pronunciation, delivery, social appropriateness, content, accuracy, and, when relevant, listening comprehension. These activities are different from translation or reading aloud a written text. When an oral-interview format is used, a supporting context must be conveyed to the student. The "default" context—the context that students will assume in the absence of an explicit indication to the contrary—is that of being interviewed by a teacher for the purpose of evaluation in a Japanese course, a situation that is quite unusual in the real world.

For listening, realistic tasks include:

— participation in role-playing by listening and responding appropriately to what is heard (INTERACTIVE LISTENING—MULTI-SKILL)

— listening to announcements, other people's conversation, or broadcast information (NONINTERACTIVE LISTENING) and answering questions about their content using the students' base language (SINGLE-SKILL)

Students are evaluated on such aspects of performance as accuracy and speed of comprehension. These activities are different from translation from Japanese to English, which would be a realistic task only if the goal of the program were to produce translators.

Note that only conversational role-playing involves both speaking and listening abilities. In a strict sense, any speaking requires listening (at least to oneself) and any writing requires reading (at least of one's own written work). This has an obvious implication for the order in which skills are introduced: listening before speaking and reading before writing.

For reading, realistic tasks include:

— reading short messages, postcards, and simple letters for content (either detailed reading or skimming)

— at an advanced level (beyond high school), reading newspaper and journal articles, short stories, essays, and novels

— searching for a specific piece of information in a written text (scanning)

Students' ability may be measured through questions based on the passage. These may be asked in Japanese, as long as the language used in the question and required in the answer is within the range of the students' ability. This means that at the beginning level, most questions will have to be in the students' base language (English). If there is a discussion of the content of reading material in Japanese, the task becomes multi-skill.

For writing, realistic tasks include:

— writing short messages, postcards, and simple letters

— listening to speech (messages, lectures) and recording the content in writing

Students are evaluated on the basis of correct selection of characters (*kana* or *kanji*, correct *kanji* among alternatives), accuracy of grammatical form, naturalness of phrasing, organization of discourse, and, when relevant, accuracy of recorded content. When both listening and writing are involved, the task becomes multi-skill.

Finally, for testing accuracy of oral or written production, tests may include inserting the correct word or words needed to complete an otherwise incomplete phrase or sentence. This task can be carried out in multiple-choice or open-ended formats. It requires clear knowledge of how different parts of Japanese are combined to form a larger unit. The ability to handle such a task is a prerequisite to accurate speech and writing.

3.3 Beware of common but unrealistic tasks.

Some tasks very commonly encountered in Japanese language programs are of dubious value as vehicles for testing. For example, students are often asked to add *furigana* to *kanji* to indicate their pronunciations. The purpose of this task is to see if students know the readings of certain characters, but it is certainly not a task that is frequently required in everyday Japanese life. When Japanese are called upon to supply *furigana* (which is not often), the *kanji* or words involved are invariably ones for which reading might be difficult even for a native speaker (e.g., one's name as given on an application form). Moreover, there are really two distinct tasks involved: associating pronunciations with *kanji* and then producing *kana* that correspond to those pronunciations. Since students have two opportunities to make a mistake, one cannot infer much from a wrong answer.

Other examples of tasks inappropriate for testing include the translation of isolated sentences to test listening comprehension; the translation of personal letters, messages, and other kinds of Japanese writing laden with markers of social relationships that have no natural translation-equivalents in English; the translation of uncontextualized sentences so as to include a particular word or expression; "conversation" in which one side consists only of unrelated questions asked in sequence; and all true-false tests.

3.4 Focus first on the more regular aspects of the target language.

The stereotypical attitude toward testing is that good tests are difficult. In fact, a good test should not be particularly difficult for a student who has been keeping up with the curriculum and has adopted good study habits.

Tests that focus on exceptions without testing the more regular and productive aspects of language forms and usage have limited use. For example, when time expressions and dates are taught, it makes little sense to zero in on exceptional forms like **nijūyokka** and **hatsuka** without also checking the more numerous unexceptional forms like **jūsannichi**.

4. Use multi-skill and single-skill tests appropriately.

In real life we encounter situations that make us call upon more than one skill at a time. For example, we need both to listen and to speak in order to participate in a conversation; we may listen to a recorded message and then write a memo to the person for whom the message has been recorded; or we may read a sign directing us to another location and then ask someone details on how to get there. Some tests should be designed to evaluate such combinations of skills. They present realistic situations that the learner is likely to encounter.

Unfortunately, when students err in these compound-skill tasks, the reason for their error is sometimes unclear. For example, if a student responds to the oral question **Itsu mimashita ka** 'When did [you] see [it]?' by writing **Kyō mimasu** '[I] will see [it] today', the tester does not know whether the problem was that the student did not hear the question correctly, did not understand the difference between **mimashita** '[I] saw [it]' and **mimasu** '[I] will see [it]', or became preoccupied with the physical writing task and made an obvious error as a result. Tests that measure one skill at a time are therefore necessary complements to multi-skill tests. Only single-skill tests pinpoint student deficiencies in a useful manner.

Designing a good single-skill test is not as easy as it may seem. For example, questions written entirely in Japanese script are not appropriate for determining understanding of grammatical patterns if they also require the reading of *kanji* or *kana* with which students are not yet completely comfortable. Failure to answer the question correctly may indicate either a failure to recall a piece of orthographic information or lack of mastery of the specific grammatical pattern in question. Similarly, when testing listening comprehension, if the test directions are written in Japanese, failure to answer the test items correctly may be caused either by inability to read or by weak listening comprehension—there is no way to tell which cause is at work when a student falters.

The same can be said about the linguistic content in each skill area. Tests should not require students to deal with new forms or usages until they have

been sufficiently practiced. Listening-comprehension questions should require only a reasonable amount of memory for answering; complicated directions should be avoided.

5. Try to incorporate some evaluation into nontesting environments.

Oral interviews may be difficult or even impossible in schools where the student/instructor ratio is high. If, however, the goals of the program include development of oral-communicative skills, and if instruction is designed to achieve these goals, then student performance in oral interaction needs to be evaluated. Ratings based on daily observation of a student's performance can be used instead of special oral-interview tests in such circumstances. (If class size is so large that it is difficult to give performance evaluation scores to everybody, the class may be divided into two groups, each group receiving a score every other day.) Daily evaluation can also be used for skills other than speaking and listening.

There are several advantages to daily evaluation/grading that make it a good practice even when class size is small. First, daily evaluation gives added incentive for students to perform well regularly; it discourages cramming for tests. Second, when a record of daily performance scores is kept, frequent quizzes become less necessary, and more time will be freed for practice. Third, daily evaluation and grading allow the teacher to provide regular feedback to students.

6. Use test results effectively.

As already mentioned, evaluation procedures are useful only when designed with specific purposes in mind. It is important to provide feedback promptly and to adjust instructional activities if necessary on the basis of test results.

6.1 Provide feedback.

Feedback is essential for both evaluative and diagnostic purposes. Students in the American educational system are used to knowing how they are doing in a class. For this purpose, tests that are given during the term rather than at the end have a greater value, since immediate feedback is possible and students have a chance to go over items in which they were found to have difficulty. Given this requirement for immediate feedback, it is unwise to give so many tests—or so

much homework—that the teacher has insufficient time to grade and comment constructively on them.

On one level, students are interested simply in whether they answered the questions correctly. At a deeper level, however, they are interested in knowing the correct answer. Grading of tests should always include providing the correct (expected) answer.

6.2 Be flexible in planning instructional activities.

Good performance in assessment activities can mean one of two things: (1) the students worked hard or were talented, or (2) the test was easy in relation to what the students were trained to handle. Likewise, bad performance can mean that (1) students were not diligent or had low aptitude, or (2) the test was pitched too high, given what students were trained to handle.

Given normal variation among students in the same class, there will always be some students—and not always the same ones—who will be unusually well or poorly prepared for a particular test. If, on the other hand, a large group of students uniformly does very well or very badly, then either the test itself or the instructional work leading up to it should be adjusted.

Always check to make sure the directions for taking the test are completely clear. Also ensure that the pace of instruction is neither too slow nor too fast. If pace is not the problem, then the kind of instructional activities may not be training students to do what they are required to do on the test.

CHAPTER 2
PRESENTATION AND SEQUENCING OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

A beginning language program should emphasize listening and speaking skills not only because this promotes natural conversational ability, but also because reading and writing skills must be built on an oral/aural foundation (Assumption II). Throughout the following discussion of how best to present Japanese to beginning students, this is the fundamental, overarching principle that guides prioritization.

1. Use authentic, contextualized samples of Japanese.

Nonauthentic material should be avoided when selecting actual utterances and written examples of Japanese. Refer back to the examples given in Assumptions III and V. As they make clear, teaching that Japanese word X "means" English word Y can be a case of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing. As a general rule, one should be wary of overreliance on such translation-equivalents. For example, the Japanese sentence **Jiyū desu** is perfectly grammatical and might be correctly translated, in the appropriate context, as "I am free," but it is not commonly used by Japanese in situations in which an American might say "I am free" meaning that he or she has some spare time. Likewise, although many dictionaries suggest that the Japanese word **ai** is equivalent to "love" in English, the way speakers of English use the noun "love" differs enormously from the way speakers of Japanese use the word **ai**. Even words recently borrowed into Japanese from English may not be the same in meaning (e.g., **sensu** 'smart taste' from English "sense").

Because of the need for authentic context when introducing new lexical items of Japanese, greater attention needs to be paid at the elementary level to increasing the number of grammatical patterns and related social functions students can control than to the number of words they know.

2. Introduce grammatical patterns in a logical sequence.

The sequencing of linguistic content is inevitable, since students of foreign languages cannot master a large number of grammatical patterns simultaneously. Our challenge lies in providing a useful sequencing of these patterns at a pace that is manageable for most students. Many language educators have argued that the syllabus should order topics by communicative functions—questions, commands, introductions, apologies, leave taking, and so on—and not by grammatical complexity. No rationale has been provided for the ordering of these functions, however. Are "questions" more complex, or more important, than "commands," for example? It makes better sense to use grammatical complexity as the principal criterion for establishing the learning sequence. (Of course, grammatical patterns that are of limited functional meaning in Japanese should be introduced later, even if they are structurally simple; and once the sequence has been determined, communicative functions that make use of the patterns must be integrated into the material to be taught.)

Grammatical patterns should be sequenced according to the following principles:

— *Emphasize the common over the rare.* As we introduce students to the language, it is imperative to start with commonly occurring patterns first. Clearly, a form such as **N desu** should precede the rarer form **N dattari**.*

Because Japanese represents a new, often unusual contrast with English, it is tempting to overemphasize certain facets because of their intrinsic interest to students. For example, *kotowaza* (proverbs), dialectal expressions, and certain obscure words or phrases may be fascinating but are of limited value in a beginning student's pursuit of language competence.**

— *Introduce the simple before the complex.* Students are able to learn more quickly and efficiently if they progress from simple utterances to the more complex. For instance, the negative form **V-nai** must precede the introduction of . . . **shika** . . . **V-nai**.*** As a rule, derivational forms should

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* Here **N** stands for any noun (nominal).

** *Kotowaza* are, of course, of importance when students reach an advanced level of competence.

*** Here **V** stands for the form of a verb (verbal) that precedes the inflectional ending.

follow the basic form. Thus, before **V-tari . . . V-tari suru** is introduced, it is necessary to master the formation of **V-ta**.

It is not necessary to analyze highly ritualized utterances. For example, in English as a second language, "so long" or "good-bye" would be taught without any extensive study from a linguistic perspective. Likewise, **konnichi wa**, **sumimasen**, or **okagesama de** requires no detailed grammatical explanation at the beginning stages.

— *Progress from the concrete to the abstract.* Concrete situations are easier to comprehend, act out, and respond to. At the beginning level, it is confusing for students to have to deal with abstract situations without first having had experience with the concrete—particularly when the meaning and use of Japanese concepts are foreign to the students.

For instance, it is easier to compare the sizes of two books than to compare the sizes of abstract X and Y.

There will be occasions when these three principles are in conflict; at such times it is the responsibility of the teacher to decide which is the most important.

3. Make sure students understand the proper use of visual reinforcement.

Using visual reinforcement (i.e., writing) when teaching spoken language can confuse students if the teacher fails to clarify the relationship between speech and written language.

Spoken Japanese can be taught without resort to any written material whatsoever, but most teachers use visual aids to provide reinforcement for students out of class and when tape-recorded models of speech are unavailable. The use of written materials to facilitate the learning of spoken Japanese (SJ) is a distinct activity from the introduction of written Japanese (WJ). Here we are concerned only with the former. (For a discussion of the latter, see Chapter 3.)*

* A brief description of the components of the Japanese writing system is included in Chapter 3, section 2.

3.1 Use romanization as a pedagogical transcription.

A PEDAGOGICAL TRANSCRIPTION is a method of writing a language so as to provide the beginning learner with a visual reminder of new sounds by means of symbols the learner already knows.

Romanization (Japanese *rōmaji*) is, for several reasons, the appropriate pedagogical transcription for English-speaking students.* The roman alphabet is already familiar to students who can read English; time need not be spent learning new symbols. If a consistent and accurate method for using the familiar letters of the alphabet is not taught at the beginning, there is a significant risk that students will improvise their own, possibly misleading, systems as they struggle to capture hard-to-hear phonemic contrasts in visual form for later reference. *Rōmaji* make it possible to denote each separate sound (phoneme) of the language and to specify the exact point of the rises and falls of pitch collectively referred to as accent (*akusento*). *Rōmaji* also facilitate the explanation of morphological variation in the verbs and adjectives of the language; whereas spaces and hyphens can be used to indicate word boundaries in romanized texts for pedagogical purposes, they are not so used in normal Japanese writing.**

Care needs to be exercised when using *rōmaji* or any other system of pedagogical transcription. Whatever system of romanization is used, the teacher must ensure that the student remembers that the rules governing the alphabetic spelling of Japanese are not the same as the rules for spelling English. Furthermore, although *rōmaji* are appearing with ever-greater frequency in authentic Japanese writing in Japan, one seldom encounters extended passages of romanized Japanese outside of textbooks and reference materials aimed at foreign students. Finally, students must be prevented from using romanization as a crutch; romanization should be a visual reminder of the sound of spoken utterances, not a text to read aloud in class.

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* For Russian students, for example, a transcription based on the cyrillic alphabet would be more appropriate.

** It should also be noted that learning romanization is necessary for the use of bilingual dictionaries, reference works, and the secondary literature about Japan and its culture. As a purely practical matter, romanization needs to be taught somewhere in the curriculum.

3.2 Do not confuse the transitional use of *hiragana* with the introduction of WJ.

Many teachers feel uncomfortable about using romanization or believe that early introduction of Japanese script can motivate some students. They prefer to use *hiragana;* this is how Japanese children begin to learn to write, though that in itself is, of course, no reason for making American students begin the same way. On the other hand, some American students are motivated to begin Japanese because they expect to encounter an "exotic" form of writing early on; the use of *kana* may have motivational value for them. Still, the *hiragana* letters are totally alien symbols for American students, and therefore they do not constitute a system of pedagogical transcription as defined above. But they can, if used properly, serve as a TRANSITIONAL NOTATION system used by itself or in combination with a pedagogical transcription. The use of *hiragana* in this way must not be confused with the introduction of written Japanese (WJ), a topic treated in Chapter 3.

The proper use of *hiragana* as a transitional notation involves, first, making sure that students have already gained a secure foundation in the sounds of spoken Japanese through oral/aural work in class. Only then will they have control over the Japanese syllables with which the individual *hiragana* letters are associated. After they have learned to use individual *hiragana* for basic syllables, they will have to be taught the special spelling rules governing their use in writing whole words. It is not acceptable to make students read the particles **wa, e,** and **o** or the long vowels in **Kyōto** and **kirei** in *hiragana* "as they sound," only later to tell them that such spellings are in reality wrong (Assumption V).

When students progress to strings longer than a word, it will be necessary from time to time to introduce marks indicating pitch accent or the difference between "hard" and "nasal" **g**, as well as spaces showing word breaks, unless romanization is being used as a pedagogical transcription simultaneously. If such special techniques are used, students must be told that they are not standard in Japanese writing. Students should certainly not be encouraged to write in *hiragana* themselves using such conventions. (Indeed, the use of *hiragana* as a transitional notation is for recognition; writing practice of any kind at this stage only takes time away from learning the spoken language.)

Care must also be taken not to introduce recent loanwords (*gairaigo*) normally written in *katakana* or other words normally written with *kanji;* whenever such words are introduced while students are using *hiragana* as a transitional notation, the teacher needs to remind students that this is not the way an educated Japanese would write them. In the case of words other than *gairaigo,* this difficulty

can be obviated by using *kanji* as they would be used in ordinary Japanese writing but supplementing them with the small-sized *hiragana* known as *furigana* (or *yomigana* or *rubi*) to indicate their pronunciations. Provided that students are required only to recognize, not reproduce, new symbols during the period when *hiragana* are being used as a transitional notation, the graphic complexity of *kanji* should not pose any particular problems.

3.3 Do not introduce SJ by means of *rōmaji* or *hiragana*.

The purpose of using *rōmaji* as a pedagogical transcription and/or *hiragana* as a transitional notation is to facilitate the learning of SJ by providing VISUAL REMINDERS of pronunciation. Although *hiragana* are a component of the Japanese writing system, introducing them for this purpose is, as already noted, very different from introducing written Japanese itself. The use of *hiragana* does not guarantee excellent pronunciation any more than the use of romanization dooms students to poor pronunciation; in both cases what counts is the quality of the model speech students hear and of the corrective feedback they receive.

Under normal circumstances educated Japanese do not write exclusively in *hiragana;* even when both *hiragana* and *katakana* have been mastered, authentic texts consisting of nothing but *kana* are extremely difficult to construct beyond the level of a single short sentence.

3.4 Do not get mired in differences among romanization systems.

Since the rules of *kana* spelling are fixed by convention, the degree of freedom one enjoys in using *hiragana* systematically as a transitional notation is rather limited. In the case of romanization, however, there are choices to be made. Any method of romanization is theoretically acceptable as long as it is phonemically consistent—that is, all segmental phonemic distinctions are clearly and consistently indicated (e.g., vowel-length contrasts, the contrast between the consonant phoneme /n/ and the mora nasal phoneme /N/, etc.). Furthermore, it is highly desirable that other phonemic features such as pitch accent and sentence intonation also be indicated, even though the student will probably not encounter such notations outside textbooks and reference works.

If *rōmaji* is used as a pedagogical transcription, its use should follow a set of clear conventions. For example, spacing between words cannot be placed arbitrarily: **watashiwa** is different from **watashi wa**; **si** and **shi** are not interchangeable within one system.

Differences among romanization systems are quite regular and few in number. It is quite reasonable to expect students to be familiar with both the Hepburn and the Kunrei-shiki system, for in practice they will encounter both—and more. In Japan, romanization systems are frequently mixed together indiscriminately. Traces of Nippon-shiki romanization survive (e.g., **Meidi-ya**). Forms technically unacceptable in any system are not uncommon (e.g., **jya**). Hepburn and Kunrei-shiki may be confused—even in the same word (e.g., **Sin'ichi**). Anachronisms exist (e.g., **Tokio Marine**; **wo** for the particle **o**). "Popular" conventions abound (e.g., **Noh** drama). And now word-processing input is creating a whole new raft of variant forms (e.g., **Toukyou**).

Finally, the purpose of using romanization in SJ language instruction is not to teach reading and writing in romanization but to facilitate SJ learning. Romanized dialogues and examples are expedient materials for students to refer to as needed, not models of Japanese writing to be reproduced or read aloud.

4. Look beyond appearance when choosing materials.

Schools, districts, or states will increasingly develop course guidelines that define the scope and sequence of their Japanese language programs. Clearly, any text must be consistent with these guidelines. The objectives of a text should be clearly delineated, meet stated pedagogical and linguistic goals, and address the specific needs of individual schools.

The content of the materials must be rich and varied. Nothing defeats the goals of a learning environment faster than boredom. In order to foster a dynamic, challenging classroom, materials must be realistic and diverse, with a variety of visual cues and information. Materials must also provide a range of listening and speaking opportunities, drills and exercises (see Chapter 4), and homework. Situational settings should also be varied, calling for both teacher-student and student-student interaction. What counts in the end is content, not how the content is packaged. With the increasingly sophisticated recording and printing processes in use today, there has been an increase in the number of slick and glossy materials available. It is important to remember that while presentation may pique a student's interest, it is of little value if the information is flawed or cannot be integrated with the goals of the program.

Review and spiraling (expanding upon previously learned material) are integral to the learning process. The student cannot be expected to retain skills and information simply because they have been "covered." Daily practice using

a language lab and/or tape recordings is essential, when using such materials, passive listening is not enough.

Teachers and students must, of course, be allowed flexibility within the framework of the course materials. Each class—each student—is to some extent unique, and teachers need to be on the lookout for opportunities to enhance active student involvement in the communicative use of the language. Nevertheless, it is the teacher's responsibility to determine the basic learning sequence and to help each student do his or her best in pursuing it (Assumption VIII).

The following checklists provide a practical set of criteria for evaluating texts and supplementary materials. At the time of this writing, it appears that there is no "ideal" text for all high schools or all colleges. Teachers will thus have to confront the question of whether to produce their own materials. As a general rule, time and effort are better spent identifying, as specifically as possible, the shortcomings of existing materials and deciding what steps to take to remedy their deficiencies. Many of these steps will involve not the production of new materials, but rather classroom techniques such as role-playing and the contextualization of other activities (discussed in Chapter 4).

In each of the checklists below, the first few points are listed in order of importance.

4.1 Overall structure and content

— Is the topical/situational content culturally authentic?

— Is the linguistic content authentic? (It should not be a version of Japanese intended for foreigners.)

— Are linguistic features presented in a step-by-step progression?

— Have provisions been made for the spiraling and review of linguistic content?

— Do the materials emphasize the common over the rare?

— Are simple linguistic features introduced before more complex ones?

— Is provision made to progress from more concrete situations to more abstract situations?

— Is the content based on teaching the native English-speaking American learner to interact cross-culturally with Japanese? (The student should not be asked to pretend that he or she is a Japanese.)

— Is the linguistic and sociolinguistic content addressed directly to native English speakers, taking their existing knowledge of their own culture and language into account?

— Do the materials make provision for the student's lack of real-world knowledge about Japan, and about situations and contexts that he or she would encounter in Japan?

— Is the content appropriate for a high school, or beginning college, learner?

— Are explanations geared to the beginning learner?

— Are students ensured access to a written representation of speech, for purposes of mastering speech, without having to master the native orthography first?

— Do the materials recognize the importance of grammatical structures for the beginner? (They should not stress memorization of vocabulary.)

— Are the four skills treated as distinct, or have they been confused one with the other?

— Do the materials offer a good balance between information and appearance, without sacrificing content to packaging?

— Is the format realistic and varied?

— Is a rationale presented for the order of study of the four skills? Are speaking and listening given priority at the beginning level?

— Is an explicit and convincing rationale offered for the sequencing of linguistic content?

4.2 Conversational component

— Are the speech samples authentic and realistic? Are they contextualized both culturally and linguistically?

— Do the speech samples provide a role model for the native English speaker, as a foreigner, for interacting with native Japanese?

— Are accurate explanations, designed for the native English speaker, provided for using the language in a socially appropriate way and for understanding the form and usage of grammatical structures?

— If the speech material is intended for total mastery, is it presented in digestible amounts?

— Is vocabulary presented in contexts that reveal meaning and usage relevant to context? (Vocabulary should not be presented as a list of noncontextualized items.)

— Are there exercises for mastering vocabulary, usage, and grammatical structures presented in an interactive, conversational format? (Drills focused only on noncommunicative, mechanical practice without regard to communicative function are insufficient.)

4.3 Noninteractive listening component

— Is such a component provided, or do the instructional materials erroneously assume that interactive listening and noninteractive listening are the same?

— Are the listening situations presented realistic and authentic, of the sort that young adults living in Japan encounter on a frequent basis? (They should not be based on listening tasks that students are unlikely to encounter, such as fairy tales and fictional stories designed for children.)

— Is the learner provided with some way of receiving feedback on the accuracy of his or her listening ability?

— Do the materials provide for practice of both intensive and extensive listening (i.e., listening for specific pieces of information and listening for overall content)?

4.4 Audiovisual support

— If audio materials are available, is the recorded speech authentic and natural?

— Has the audio material been recorded at normal conversational speed? (It should not be unnaturally slowed down.)

— Have provisions been made in the recording of natural-rate speech for the beginner to access the meaning and engage in repetition? Specifically, are there backward buildups of sentences or other formats that facilitate initial practice without sacrificing natural speed?

— Is there the right amount of time, neither too much nor too little, between taped utterances for student response?

— For conversation, does the format of the audio component promote realistic, interactive conversation in contextualized settings?

— For noninteractive listening, does the format of the audio component provide authentic and appropriate contexts and situations?

— For computer-based learning, does the format promote understanding about the language, or understanding about performance in the language? Is this distinction made clear to the learner?

4.5 Reading component

This checklist is included here for completeness. Bear in mind that reading should be introduced only after a suitable foundation in listening and speaking has been laid. (See Chapter 3.)

— Are reading samples authentic and realistic, even if short? (They should not require the reading of material that an adult Japanese or foreigner would rarely or never encounter in real life.)

— Do the reading samples provide contextual support, or do they consist of noncontextualized sentences in isolation?

— Are learners asked to read for meaning and to act on the basis of their comprehension, or simply to translate into English?

— Has mastery of the reading material been facilitated by prior mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures through the spoken language? (The learner should not be asked to master new vocabulary and grammar through reading exclusively.)

— Are provisions made for explaining word usage and grammatical structures as they are used in WJ?

— Is vocabulary presented in amounts the learner can digest?

— Are practice reading sections designed to require real reading under time pressure? (They should not promote word-by-word decoding—going directly from Japanese script to English, bypassing the actual forms of the Japanese language—or the conscious problem-solving strategies more typical of translation.)

4.6 Writing component

This checklist is included here for completeness. Bear in mind that true writing (elementary composition) can be introduced only after a suitable foundation in listening, speaking, and reading has been laid. (See Chapter 3.)

— Has writing been facilitated by prior study of speech and reading? (Writing should not be presented as a translation task from English.)

— Are learners asked to write realistic passages that have practical uses, such as thank-you notes or phone messages? (They should not be asked to produce texts that adult Japanese would rarely write, such as stories or "How I Spent My Vacation.")

— Have provisions been made to teach the stroke order of *kanji* and the mechanics of the *kana* systems?

— Are students provided with realistically open-ended goals? (They should not be asked repeatedly to perform narrowly defined tasks like copying model passages.)

5. Adapt available materials as necessary rather than creating new materials locally.

Ideal instructional materials are hard to find. It is likely to be even harder to produce new materials locally. While teachers may have to compromise between what they really need and what is commercially available, it is more advisable to make that compromise than to produce materials without training in materials preparation and without assignment of a block of time for preparation. Creating new materials will take away time needed to prepare for daily classroom activities.

When adapting available materials, review the checklists provided in sections 4.1 through 4.6 of this chapter, and make changes as needed to meet at least the most important criteria.

CHAPTER 3
THE WRITING SYSTEM

Confusion about the relationship between written and spoken Japanese lies at the heart of many of the common misunderstandings about the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language.

1. Lay a foundation in the spoken language first.

It is possible to teach SJ (spoken Japanese) without reference to the customary script. Literacy is not a prerequisite for acquiring linguistic competence. That is the point of "primacy of speech" (Assumption II). If one does not start with SJ, then reading and writing degenerate into an exercise in decoding rather than the fluent, natural process we experience when reading or writing our native language. Work on SJ contributes to progress in WJ (written Japanese) at a later stage; early work on WJ, however, does not necessarily contribute to spoken competence.

We also need to acknowledge that much of what characterizes WJ is anachronistic: it employs grammatical patterns and vocabulary characteristic of earlier forms of the language that in ordinary conversation would sound quaint, excessively formal, or obscure. It is more practical for students to learn WJ in terms of prior knowledge of SJ rather than the other way around.

For the native speaker, it understandably comes as a shock to present the language without standard orthography. After all, education in Japan for native Japanese is defined in terms of literacy. What is more, Japanese generally identify their language with its traditional written representation. Teachers need to realize that the American learning Japanese is very different from the native Japanese learning to read and write.

2. Present students only with authentic orthography.

Japanese is usually written with a rich combination of *katakana* and *hiragana* (Japanese syllabic script collectively called *kana*), *kanji* (Chinese characters as used

in Japan), alphanumeric symbols (A–Z, a–z, 0–9), and a wide variety of punctuation marks—some familiar to Americans, others not. In many circumstances there are two or more acceptable ways of putting down the same word or phrase on paper, but there are fairly consistent, if somewhat imprecise, rules that limit the writer's freedom of choice.

For example, it is normal to write the increasingly large number of *gairaigo* (recent foreign loanwords) in *katakana;* using *hiragana* instead is an aberration. Likewise, the overwhelming majority of *kango* (Sino-Japanese words) are written in *kanji,* not *hiragana.* A final example: Japanese do not use blank spaces to separate words or phrases within sentences; they rely instead on the linguistic structure and overall contrast among *katakana* (simple and angular), *hiragana* (cursive and slightly more complex), *kanji* (squarish and dense), and other symbols used in normal writing to provide the kind of information readers of English pick up from the distribution of spaces and punctuation marks.

Given these fundamental facts about Japanese writing, it would clearly violate the principle of "no misinformation" (Assumption V) to demand that students read or write texts consisting entirely of *hiragana* or with English-style spaces between words; neither should they be expected to read or write texts written entirely in romanization, even when romanization is being used as a reminder of what they are hearing in class or on tape. Authentic texts—the kind of texts students will see when they use Japanese in real-life situations—will be seen only in standard Japanese orthography.*

3. Consider the advantages of introducing *katakana* before *hiragana.*

As remarked in Chapter 2, section 3, the use of romanization as a pedagogical transcription or *hiragana* as a transitional notation during the early phases of SJ instruction is a separate matter from introducing WJ proper. Indeed, there are many reasons for beginning with *katakana* rather than *hiragana* during the early stages of WJ study.

Katakana can be introduced easily because recent loanwords, mostly from English, are generally written in *katakana.* This means that there is a large, rather familiar portion of modern Japanese vocabulary that can be written authentically

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* Note that the phrase "authentic texts" here refers only to orthography. For a definition of "authentic language," see the introduction.

with *katakana*—not to mention the students' own names and the names of the places where they live and study. Japanese words not usually written with *katakana* are totally alien to most Americans, and the large number of symbols with which they are written cannot all be introduced at the same time. The authenticity of *katakana* for loanwords is also important because relatively few nouns are normally written in *hiragana*, but most particles and many high-frequency verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are. Loanwords are typically nouns. If, therefore, one begins with *katakana*, students can begin reading whole, authentic sentences soon after beginning *hiragana;* if *hiragana* come first, nonauthentic orthography is virtually unavoidable.

Other advantages of starting with *katakana* may seem rather technical to those who do not read Japanese themselves, but they are equally important. More "small forms"—the small *kana* used when writing syllables such as **kya**, **gyo**, **che**, **ti**, and **fi**—are seen in *katakana* than in *hiragana*, and in a wider variety of situations. Furthermore, some aspects of *hiragana* usage are anachronistic and irregular, such as the notation of long "mid" vowels (/ee/ and /oo/), the representation of the common postpositions **wa**, **e**, and **o**, and the choice of *kana* used for **ji** and **zu** in different words.* Because it is simpler to teach general and regular patterns before specific exceptions, these facts favor introducing *katakana* before *hiragana.*

Finally, because *katakana* are used to write recent loanwords, starting with them affords an excellent opportunity for sharpening students' awareness of the differences between the Japanese and English sound systems, and to point out that English words used by Japanese in their language do not necessarily mean the same thing as in English. In addition, the many available *katakana* realia—such as McDonald's menus, Baskin-Robbins' ice cream lists, computer advertisements, and the like—provide materials that are both authentic and extremely interesting for the beginning student.

If a teacher uses *hiragana* as a transitional notation in early SJ learning, his or her students will, of course, have something of a head start when they begin using *hiragana* in their proper WJ setting. Even these students, however, might do well to begin WJ learning with *katakana* for all the reasons given above.

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* The choice depends on whether the **j-** or **z-** initial consonant comes from an earlier **z-** or an earlier **d-**.

4. Teach *kanji* in context rather than in isolation.

A sentence of Japanese means the same thing whether it is written entirely in *kana* or even alphabetically rather than in customary script. It is the same sentence; as far as language is concerned, it conveys the same information.*

The linkage between *kanji* and word meanings in Japanese is analogous to the linkage between Latin and Greek roots (like civi- or hydr-) and word meanings in English. The vocabulary of a native speaker of English grows naturally and rapidly long before he or she learns etymologies in school; the etymologies add a new dimension to the appreciation of familiar words and help with the memorization of new words that include the same roots, but a true understanding of what words mean and how they are properly used comes only through the experience of language use—hearing and using the words in context, reading and writing them for purposeful communication. In the same way, Japanese children have a large vocabulary before they start learning *kanji;* in fact, this is the chief reason they are able to cope as well as they do with the large number of *kanji* and *kanji* pronunciations. As they progress through high school and college, the vast array of *kanji* and their pronunciations facilitates the learning of advanced vocabulary, but it never replaces the need to internalize the meanings of words through actual use.

Beginning American students of Japanese therefore need not be overly concerned with the etymological structure of words written with *kanji;* their first order of business is to develop oral/aural skills. If they can recognize and correctly use the words they are asked to learn to read and write with *kanji,* more than half their job is already done; what remains, though perhaps tedious, is manageable. But if students are expected to learn new words and *kanji* simultaneously, it is almost impossible to design a curriculum that moves fast enough to avoid boredom yet slow enough for most students to keep up.

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* Many Japanese proper nouns may be written in two or more ways. Using one notation instead of another creates a distinction in writing where there is none in speech. Cf. English "Catherine," "Kathryn," etc. Such unsystematic, arbitrary differences are, however, of little importance to students until they have learned the more regular features of the writing system. Like all languages, Japanese also has homonyms (different words pronounced alike). Sometimes different *kanji* are used to write words belonging to one homonym group. Research has shown that Japanese seldom make effective use of such extralinguistic information; on the contrary, *kanji* errors in ordinary writing and reading are concentrated in the words that belong to homonym groups (Horodeck 1987). In any case, the vocabulary of beginning students normally does not include homonyms of this kind (unless one disregards pitch accent).

The ability to read authentic texts in Japanese is not simply a function of the number of *kanji* the foreign learner knows. Rather, it is the knowledge of the language and how it is used that will help reading for comprehension. Ability to recognize and distinguish individual characters is a necessary but far from sufficient condition for reading. Although Japanese elementary students are required to learn a specific number of *kanji*, it is not useful to apply this requirement to the teaching of reading and *kanji* in Japanese programs in America. The two situations are fundamentally different.

Indeed, the existence of the many charts of *kanji* presented in grade sequence, used for teaching Japanese children, may lead a teacher to think that this is an excellent sequence for introducing *kanji* to American students. It is not. As stated above, Japanese children already have a vast lexical background, and it is this background that makes the sequence viable. American students do not have this wealth of acquired knowledge, and therefore they need a different approach.

In addition, there are many myths about *kanji* that both teachers and students, and particularly administrators who do not know Japanese themselves, need to view with critical suspicion. These include the claims that Chinese characters constitute a language-independent system of logical symbols or ideograms; that the number of homonyms in Japanese and Chinese is so huge that *kanji* are indispensable for writing them; that *kanji* are "right-brain" while *kana* (syllabic script) and *rōmaji* (romanization) are "left-brain"; that people who use *kanji* never suffer from dyslexia or other reading problems; and that failing to introduce *kanji* as early as possible permanently damages students. None of these notions is supported by credible scientific evidence, and none is an acceptable basis for structuring a curriculum in Japanese reading and writing.*

We are seeing a proliferation of study guides, flash cards, learners' dictionaries, workbooks, and, most recently, computer programs that cater to the demand for ever-more potent means of committing Chinese characters to memory. Beginning students especially have to be reminded of the need to learn the meanings and proper usage of words written with *kanji* in addition to the *kanji* themselves.

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* For a refutation of the claim that *kanji* are ideograms, see DeFrancis 1989; on homonyms and the alleged indispensability of *kanji*, DeFrancis 1984; on brain research, Paradis, Hagiwara, and Hildebrandt 1985; on reading research, Stevenson et al. 1986; on the merits of not rushing into *kanji*, Packard 1990.

5. Have students use dictionaries appropriate to their level of ability.

Because of the complexity of the Japanese writing system, comprehensive bilingual dictionaries created for the Japanese market are usually beyond the reading ability of even fairly advanced foreign students. Fortunately, dictionaries are not really necessary for beginners. In a good course students are introduced to an adequate amount of vocabulary; if anything, the unsupervised use of dictionaries tends to encourage inappropriate use of words and inflectional forms.

When students are ready to start using dictionaries, instruction in their proper use is essential.

6. Distinguish among handwriting, calligraphy, and composition.

The learning of Japanese handwriting can consume an inordinate amount of time for beginning American students, especially if the teacher wishes to go beyond the simple pragmatic ability to produce characters correctly and delve into the highly prescriptive world of calligraphy. While care should be taken to ensure that students do not learn to produce writing so unintelligible that it interferes with communication, it should be kept in mind that American students have fundamentally different needs from Japanese schoolchildren, who already know the language and begin calligraphy lessons early. Practicing handwriting should be neither drudgery nor an escape from the more important aspects of language learning.

In any case, handwriting is not composition, a task that requires a firm grasp of the structures of WJ. Writing Japanese prose with a communicative purpose in standard orthography is almost totally beyond the control of beginning and even fairly advanced students. The sheer time required for producing neatly written manuscript—let alone something that is linguistically correct and appropriate—takes an enormous amount of time, even for native speakers. It is also vital to keep the difference between SJ and WJ in mind; even at a fairly elementary level, purposeful writing entails vocabulary and grammatical constructions not necessarily used in speech. What is more, writing authentic Japanese prose entails stylistic requirements far beyond the ability of a student who has studied for only a few years. And unless students receive specific corrective feedback on all the linguistic errors in their written work, they get the implicit message that what they have written is acceptable Japanese.

True composition therefore cannot play much of a role at the elementary level of Japanese language instruction, unless one is willing to have students use nonauthentic structures and style and nonstandard orthography—for example, romanization or *kana* with at most an erratic sprinkling of *kanji*. For some teachers this may be an acceptably small price to pay for getting students to practice purposeful communication—for example, writing postcards or letters to real or fictitious pen pals—but they need to bear in mind that to correct even a short written assignment for a moderately large class in sufficient detail to provide useful corrective feedback can take many hours. In addition, any "creativity" stimulated by such an activity is likely to be informed by students' base-culture expectations of how written communication is supposed to proceed rather than by target-culture values, which must be explicitly taught.

7. Put Japanese word processors in the hands of people who can use them.

It has occasionally been suggested that the time-saving features of commercially available Japanese-script word-processing equipment can be put to use in the teaching of Japanese composition.* This proposition is dubious for several reasons, apart from issues such as purchase cost and maintenance.

First, the objective is to teach language, not to teach how to operate a machine. (By analogy, teaching arithmetic is far more fundamental than teaching someone how to operate a calculator.) Second, popular conversion-type (*kanji henkan*) word processors offer features that students would be better off without. They give the user choices among *kanji*, *kanji* pronunciations, and *kanji*-plus-*kana* combinations that are often obscure, pedantic, or inconsistent. Third, it is doubtful that sparing foreign students the need to practice by hand will help them acquire the rudiments, for native speakers who use word processors to the exclusion of pen and paper typically experience a deterioration in the ability to recall and write *kanji*; this shows that the reinforcement of daily practice is necessary for the maintenance of writing skills.

Teachers of Japanese who know the language well can certainly put word processors to good use in preparing materials, and there can be little doubt that

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* On the current state of computer-based instruction in Japanese as a second language, see Unger, Granich, and Hatasa 1992. Although some currently available programs may be useful in supplementing classroom work in the study of WJ, few if any are applicable to work with SJ.

many fairly advanced students ready to begin reading Japanese in earnest will find using word processors an engrossing and rewarding experience; nevertheless, though such equipment may pique the curiosity of beginning students, use of it by them has little place in an introductory Japanese language curriculum.

8. Test reading comprehension independently of linguistic competence.

If items on a test are presented in authentic Japanese script only, the teacher has no way of knowing why students answer incorrectly. Is it because they do not know what a word means, how to use it, or the grammatical structure in which it is used? Or is it because they simply cannot read a particular *kanji?* Likewise, if items are presented exclusively in some less-than-authentic format—such as romanization, or Japanese script with *furigana* on every *kanji*—the teacher has no way of knowing whether students who answer correctly can in fact read the same material in authentic script. In the language of test development, linguistic competence and knowledge of the orthography in Japanese are independent variables. (See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of testing.)

CHAPTER 4
ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

This chapter presents suggestions for making classroom activities effective and efficient. In high schools and colleges where it is difficult to assign a large amount of homework in any single subject area, the classroom is the primary place where learning occurs. This is especially true of subjects like Japanese, for which there is usually no support outside the classroom. Rarely do the people who surround the student at home know Japanese. There are few media programs available in Japanese except in cities like New York or Honolulu. In many high schools and colleges, teachers of Japanese—and other foreign languages—face the difficulty of having to teach a skill to a large number of students at once. All of these factors contribute to making the efficiency of instruction and learning a crucially important consideration for classroom activities.

1. Provide a thorough orientation to studying Japanese. (Assumptions VIII and X)

The goals of the course or the program and expectations for the students should be stated clearly before students begin their studies. (See Chapter 1 for a full discussion of goals.) Orientation on expectations is important for two reasons: foreign language learning, unlike many other subject areas, requires a large amount of skill learning; and Japanese is among the most difficult languages for native speakers of English to learn.

For most students, studying means reading books, listening to lectures, solving problems, and writing answers. While study of a foreign language may involve all of these study activities, it also requires a great deal of practice. Students should have a clear understanding of what learning a foreign language entails before they start to study Japanese. They need to know that studying Japanese—or any other foreign language—is essentially different from studying history or mathematics, for it will inevitably require a certain amount of mechanical practice that may seem relatively boring.

Japanese is a "truly foreign" language.* The structure and use of individual words, phrases, sentences, and conversational exchanges in Japanese and in English are radically different. Tacit assumptions that American students make about Japanese language use on the basis of common sense are more likely to be wrong than right. People conduct discussions, offer apologies, extend invitations, make requests, and so forth quite differently in the two cultures, and the differences are reflected in the language. Japanese culture is foreign to American students. All of these differences contribute to making Japanese a very difficult language for American students to learn. After only three to four years of regular instruction, students cannot be expected to converse intelligently over the full range of topics, from architecture to zoology, with which educated native speakers are supposed to have at least a passing acquaintance.

Another source of difficulty in Japanese is the extreme complexity of its writing system. It is unreasonable to expect students to be able to read literary works written in Japanese after only three hundred to four hundred hours of instruction, even with a substantial amount of work outside of class.

Of course, the difficulty of Japanese for American students does not mean that they cannot learn it. In fact, given strong student motivation, high-quality instruction and instructional materials, and administrative support, high school or college students can learn a great deal of functional Japanese. Information on what students can expect to be able to do at the end of the course should be provided in the orientation. If possible, orientation should be given both in writing and orally, and in the case of high school students, relevant portions of it should be provided to parents as well.

As the field of Japanese language pedagogy matures, articulation between high school and college programs is bound to improve. At the present time, however, high school students need to know that three years of study in high school will not necessarily qualify them for a second-level, let alone fourth-level, course in college, if only because of the higher demands placed on college students for self-discipline and study outside of class.

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* Jorden and Walton 1987. Difficulty in foreign languages is generally determined by the length of time required for a learner to reach a certain level of proficiency. The Defense Language Institute divides different foreign languages into four categories according to this criterion. Category IV includes Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic, in which the average learner needs 1,320 hours of classroom work to reach the level of proficiency comparable to that attained in 450 hours in Category I languages such as French, Spanish, and German.

2. Use class time primarily for learning Japanese, not for learning about Japanese. (Assumptions III and VII)

Foreign language learning by individuals who have already acquired their native language and who are cognitively mature involves both knowledge about the language and knowledge of it. Knowledge ABOUT the language means knowing how to describe it. While this ability is helpful in language learning, it is not the same as language learning. In contrast, knowledge OF a foreign language means being able to use it to function in spoken and written interactions with natives of the target culture. This involves developing skills, and it requires much practice.

Classroom activities must be balanced between explaining about Japanese and practicing its use, with heavier emphasis on the latter. Developing automaticity in the use of Japanese communicative skills requires much more time than learning about Japanese. The latter is most efficiently accomplished by reading explanations written in English and/or listening to lectures delivered in English. Classroom time should be divided carefully so as to allow maximum time for practice, for which reading is not a substitute. If the goal of the course is only to develop knowledge about the language and the culture, this should be stated clearly in the orientation.

If it is reasonable to expect study outside the classroom but not to expect students to work with tapes, television, instructional videos, or computers, the teacher can give reading assignments about Japanese language and culture that are relevant to language use. In this way most or all of the class time can be used for skill development.

3. Make certain that classroom language is comprehensible to the students at every stage of learning. (Assumption I)

The Japanese classroom in an American school is different from real-life settings in Japan, where students may "pick up" Japanese randomly. Selected forms and functions should be introduced gradually and practiced after each introduction. Except for a few expressions that are presented as ritualized expressions without linguistic analysis, the language should be presented and explained as a system.

3.1 Gradually expand what students can handle productively and receptively.

The introduction of new concepts, forms, and functions should be gradual and systematic. It should also be accompanied by extensive practice that integrates the new and the old. The joy of learning and knowing a foreign language comes when one can put what one knows, however little, to effective use. Teachers must resist the temptation to monopolize class time by introducing large numbers of new forms.

This has two important implications. First, students should not be expected, or even encouraged, to engage in activities that require forms or functions to which they have not been introduced. This also means that teachers must avoid using "extra" items—vocabulary, expressions, and symbols that have not been systematically introduced—for it takes time and concentration away from matters of higher priority, such as smooth delivery, socially correct usage, and so on. The language must be controlled, without affecting authenticity or presenting content at a level below students' ability, until students build a minimum foundation in Japanese (and except for circumstances discussed in sections 3.2 and 11 below).

Second, forms and functions that have been introduced need to be practiced thoroughly. This does not mean immediate mastery; indeed, unless new items are practiced repeatedly over a period of time, students will not develop any automaticity or ease in using them. It means, rather, that students are better served by being taught less, and being allowed to master it in speaking and listening, than by being exposed to more than they can master. Particularly in the case of new vocabulary, which at more advanced levels needs to be deliberately taught and practiced, beginning students should not be overloaded.

Of course, perfect mastery at each level cannot be expected, since what is introduced in hour 20 may recombine items from hour 3 in more complex ways. This is why it is important to revisit in a spiraling fashion topics and forms that were previously introduced.

3.2 Select items for introduction carefully.

Haphazard introduction of new words and phrases is frustrating and discouraging for students. It is also unproductive in the early stages of learning, when students have not internalized even a skeleton of the language system. (See Chapter 2 for a discussion of selection and sequencing.)

Aside from the items that are introduced in instructional materials, teachers may incorporate in the systematic presentation scheme a few vocabulary items that pertain to the area in which the school is located or to the lives of a particular group of students. The number of these items should be restricted, and once introduced, they must be practiced just like any other items.

There is only one type of "unknown" item that is permissible in an introductory foreign language classroom. It is the kind that enhances a communicative activity without requiring any response from the student—for example, **Sō desu ne** 'Yes indeed!', **Sō desu nē** 'That's right, isn't it!', and the like in response to a student's speech. The use of these expressions by the teacher, even before they are formally introduced to students, helps create a truly authentic interactional environment, and they should not require any explanation. The successful use of such items requires a thorough familiarity with individual students' knowledge of the language, for students will inevitably pick up anything they hear repeatedly—it is up to the teacher to make sure that they use appropriately what they pick up.

As students develop automaticity in the comprehension and production of basic patterns and their phonology stabilizes, they should be trained gradually to cope with new and more complex items on their own. Doing so prepares them for encounters with native speakers who are not trained teachers and who will not restrict their vocabulary only to words to which the students have been systematically introduced. (See section 11 below for more discussion of this point.)

4. Present students only with authentic language. (Assumptions III, V, and VI)

There need be no contradiction between using authentic language and using language controlled by the students' skill level.* The key is to provide proper context so that each utterance or writing sample is culturally and linguistically authentic as well as controlled.

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* The term "authentic" is commonly used in reference to materials written by the native for the native. It is difficult to apply this definition to the spoken language without modifying it to read as follows: "Speech spoken by natives in their social interactions with natives." This means that such speech is not necessarily recorded, as is the case for the written language. For spoken language, "authenticity" overlaps with "naturalness" for the most part.

Authenticity of language applies to its form, social appropriateness, discourse structure, and style. In addition, spoken language must be delivered in an authentic manner; similarly, the written language must be presented in authentic orthography (discussed in Chapter 3). The requirement for authenticity has different ramifications for target-native and base-native teachers. (See section 12 below.)

4.1 Speak at a natural speed.

Natural speed in conversational speech covers a range among native speakers of Japanese. Anything outside of this range, whether too fast or too slow, is unnatural.

It is common practice among some language teachers to slow down, sometimes unconsciously, especially for beginning students. Slow speech is not necessarily unnatural, as long as it falls within the normal range of natural speech speeds. But as the speed of speech drops below a normal level, other phonological characterizations also change. For example, the vowels /u/ and /i/, in places where they are normally whispered, become fully voiced in excessively slow speech. Moreover, students who learn to comprehend only slow speech have difficulty comprehending normal speech outside the language classroom. Normal speaking speed may be disconcerting to some beginners, but it is not problematic after a few hours of practice.

4.2 Use authentic forms.

Preoccupation with what is thought to be "correct" Japanese produces students who speak in a stilted manner that is often closer to written style. For example, a "complete sentence" in Japanese does not have to have an expressed grammatical subject, nor does the sentence have to be linguistically complex (e.g., **Itadakimasu** '[I] will take [it]', **Tsukaremashita** '[I] got tired', **Tesuto datta** '[It] was a test'). Answers to questions regularly focus on new information without repeating all of the elements heard in the question. Students should not be required to utter a "complete" sentence in the sense of having a subject and verb as in English, unless it is appropriate to do so in the given linguistic and social context.

Authentic spoken Japanese also includes an extensive use of sentence particles, such as **yo**, **ne**, and **nē**, in addition to **ka**. The appropriate use of these particles must be explained and practiced.

So-called male/female speech requires a more accurate explanation than is traditionally offered. Japanese female high school students now use forms that are commonly referred to as "male" style (e.g., **X da yo/zo/ze**) when they talk to another high school student, male or female, in informal situations. Conversely, Japanese male high school students would not use these "male" forms when speaking to an adult, male or female. Authenticity in this context means knowing that there are proper times and places to use certain kinds of speech, and that the rules have nothing to do with English.

4.3 Use culturally appropriate forms.

Language is culturally appropriate when it correctly reflects the interpersonal relationships and social norms of conversation that occur within the culture. In Japanese every utterance reflects the relationships among the speaker, the addressee, the referent, and, if present, the audience. For example, the use of **desu/-masu** style versus **da** style is a necessary choice, not something optional.* Japanese high school students use the **da** style almost exclusively when talking among themselves (especially when they belong to the same age cohort or school class), reflecting their in-group relationships.** The same high school students use **desu/-masu** style when talking to teachers or certain other outsiders. Furthermore, the choice between polite style (e.g., **nasaru/itasu** or **nasaimasu/itashimasu** '[someone] (will) do [it]') and plain style (e.g., **suru** or **shimasu**) is not only a matter of form but also depends on context. None of these variables should be ignored in any classroom activity.

Culturally appropriate forms can be practiced by organizing various types of interactions and role-play exercises—teacher-student, student-student, male-male, female-female, or male-female, for example.

4.4 Pay attention to spoken Japanese as distinct from written Japanese.

As mentioned in the assumptions and in Chapter 3, spoken Japanese (SJ) and written Japanese (WJ) differ significantly. Characteristics typical of casual SJ include the optional dropping of certain phrase particles, the frequent use of

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* **Desu/-masu** style refers to predicate forms such as **sō desu** '[that] is right', **sō deshita** '[that] was right', **takai desu** '[it] is expensive', **takakatta desu** '[it] was expensive', **ikimasu** '[I] (will) go', and **ikimashita** '[I] went'. The **da**-style counterparts of these predicates are, respectively, **sō da, sō datta, takai, takakatta, iku,** and **itta.**

** See Lebra 1976; Wetzel 1984.

contractions such as **ja** rather than **de wa**, elliptical sentences and sentence fragments, paraphrasing, and inverted sentences. Conversely, SJ typically does not include the **de aru** form of the copula, even though it is common in WJ. When the student's speech is natural SJ, it must never be corrected to WJ in the mistaken belief that written forms are more prestigious. Careful and consistent correction, of course, is necessary in the case of pronunciation and spoken forms that result in miscommunication.

5. Devote more class time to speaking and listening than to reading and writing. (Assumptions II and VII)

Normal conversation does not permit the kind of deliberation that typically goes into writing. Successful colloquial interaction requires the spontaneity and automaticity that can come only from extensive practice. For this reason, more than half of the total class time should be spent on speaking and listening activities, especially at the initial stage of learning, when the student is developing an awareness of the linguistic and cultural code.

Because the difference in orthography between English and Japanese is so obvious, even to those who know nothing else about the Japanese language, many Americans tend to equate learning these "exotic" symbols with learning the language. School programs in Japanese should not encourage such an impression. Many school districts, and even some college foreign language departments, require that four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—be given equal emphasis. In some cases a fifth—culture—is included as a separate entity. This requirement only hinders the learning of what is most useful and generally easiest for students to learn.

Another problem is that educated native speakers of any language tend to assume that speaking ability is acquired "naturally," and that the reading and writing ability gained through formal education constitutes language learning. However, natives are fluent in their native language by the time they begin to learn to read. They have already acquired the language prior to formal education.

Furthermore, the Japanese writing system is just as alien to American students as the language is. When they are sufficiently prepared to embark on learning the written language, the focus of instruction should therefore be initially restricted to recognition of the symbols, the different ways in which *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji* are used, introducing students gradually to simple samples of writing. (See Chapter 3.) While some class time may be spent on

symbol-recognition practice, much of this work can be handled with computer-based instructional programs, if available.

When students advance beyond the elementary level, they can be gradually introduced to a wider variety of texts for reading. (Remember that fluent reading is not the same as character-by-character decoding.) Note, however, that interaction involving speech can be practiced only in class, where immediate feedback is possible, whereas practice in reading and writing can be done outside of class if homework assignments—with clear and specific instructions—are given. Such reading and writing assignments should be followed by timely feedback from the instructor.

6. Distinguish between drills and exercises. (Assumption V)

For the student to learn to understand and produce utterances that are socially appropriate, contextually relevant, and in keeping with the reality of the worldview of the target culture, contextualized exercises must be the main component of classroom activities.* In EXERCISES there may be more than one possible appropriate answer. Such context-driven exercises must be supported by mechanical DRILLS—exchanges in which there is only one correct response for the student to give. This is because speaking and listening in social interactions involve the ability to produce and recognize language promptly. Mechanical drills help students with their initial memorization of the forms that are the building blocks of Japanese; contextualized exercises help them internalize the memorized forms as well as information about the appropriate situations in which they are used.

Speech in reaction to a context is probably the most authentic kind of speech. Contexts for exercises must be carefully established in order to elicit different kinds of forms (e.g., statements, questions, exclamations) that represent the full range of communicative functions (e.g., seeking information, providing information, expressing emotion, effecting a change). A teacher's command to use a certain form in an utterance is not an authentic motivation for communication. One would only rarely hear such utterances as "Change everything I say to the negative" except in a language classroom.

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* Direct translation from English to Japanese may result in a well-formed sentence, but the act of uttering that Japanese sentence may not necessarily be culturally appropriate.

There are three conditions that must be met for exercises to be contextually meaningful: establishing motivation for speech, defining participants, and demonstrating the Japanese worldview. These are treated in the next three sections.

6.1 Establish motivation for speech.

In the real world there is a motivation for every utterance or purposeful silence. Context determines these motivations. In the classroom the motivation for speech may be established through, for example, props, picture cards, action, and oral explanation.

Visual aids are particularly useful when students have limited comprehension ability. For example, an object with a price tag marked with a very low price can be used to elicit an utterance like **Yasui desu nē** '[It] is cheap, isn't it!'. It does not matter if the students do not know the Japanese word for the particular object being discussed. A shopper can ask if a shop carries a certain type of pen only if he or she has not seen any of that variety on display. At the same time, the model item has to be visible to justify the use of **konna** in the question **Konna pen arimasu ka** '[Do you] have this kind of pen?'. If these sentences are practiced without establishing the conditions that call for the act of uttering them, it is merely practice in saying words, not communicating, in Japanese.

Visual aids, while extremely useful, should not themselves be the focus of activities. Thus, there is reason to have pictures of Japanese food when practicing restaurant conversations, but using class time to prepare Japanese food is not properly a part of this exercise.* Some teachers find cooking, dancing, *origami*, and other "learned culture" activities very important because they make students aware of unique aspects of Japanese life and often help curb attrition. It needs to be remembered, however, that not all native speakers of Japanese learn to cook, dance, or do *origami*. At the beginning level of language learning, gaining familiarity with acquired culture is more important than picking up bits of learned culture.

A language classroom is a special setting in which conditions for certain utterances exist naturally. There should be no difference in attitude between speaking Japanese as part of a prepared exercise and speaking it within a real situation that happens to arise in the classroom. If a student wants to tell the

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* Food preparation can become a vehicle for language practice only if the linguistic forms necessary to talk about the cooking process are being learned. Then there remains the question of how essential such forms are to beginning students in a formal instructional setting.

teacher or a fellow student something relevant to the ongoing activity, this should be encouraged (as long as class time is not dominated by a single eager speaker, and as long as it does not result in "speaking English in Japanese"). The instructor must be careful to respond to the informational content while at the same time paying attention to the form.

6.2 Define participants.

The question of who participates in an interaction also influences the style of speech. High school students should learn to interact in a manner appropriate for high school students. This includes not only informal interaction with Japanese high school students but also more formal interaction with adults.

A classroom naturally allows two types of interaction in terms of participants: teacher-student interaction* and student-student interaction. Other roles—sales clerk, shopper, neighbor, family member—may be assigned to students or the teacher, to practice interaction in a variety of contexts. Depending on the presumed (or real) social relationship among the participants in the conversation, students should practice choosing between the **desu/-masu** and **da** styles, plain and polite styles (see section 4.3 above), and so on.

Teacher participation in the interaction has three positive effects: (1) it allows easier manipulation and control of the form and content of the interaction; (2) it is a more realistic model of interaction with the Japanese if the teacher is ethnically Japanese; and (3) it is the only chance for the student to practice interacting with an adult while in the classroom. Some teachers may find this too time-consuming to pursue with a large number of students, but such model interaction is crucially important, especially at the early stage of instruction, when students have no intuitions about how to interact with Japanese.

Student-student interaction should take place with the teacher's supervision. Pair work or group activities, in which a number of pairs/groups work simultaneously, usually result in maximum participation and reduced tension. For Western European languages, group activities have been found to result in increased motivation, greater frequency of self-correction, more flexibility and complexity within exchange patterns, and greater peer cooperation in filling in each other's gaps.** Special precautions need to be taken when applying this

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* This includes interaction with a teacher in a studio via satellite.

** Trosborg 1984.

technique to Japanese, because the chances are much greater that students will mistakenly follow base-culture models when practicing the target language. Group work should always be preceded by practice of the requisite forms, during which the teacher can demonstrate appropriate linguistic behavior and context.

Small-group activities are most effective when they are used for a relatively short period of time, after practice with the teacher and immediately followed by a checkup in which students are held accountable for the outcome of group work.

6.3 Familiarize students with the ways of Japanese life.

Different cultures have different views of the world. A foreign language classroom is an ideal environment for fostering students' awareness of this important fact. This leads to genuinely global and multicultural education and allows the instruction of language IN culture. The study of learned culture in the language classroom inevitably takes time away from the study of the language in its associated acquired-cultural context.

The Japanese worldview can be best demonstrated by interacting with students as an ordinary Japanese interlocutor would, rather than in the role of a teacher of the Japanese language. Such expressions as **Yoku dekimashita** '[You] did [it] well' and **Hai, sō desu ne** '[That] is right!' are typical expressions of a teacher and are awkward in many contexts in which students are asked to practice. If a student says something that would offend a Japanese in a particular context, the instructor can first show that he or she is offended, then provide a model for a better form. When a student speaks in a culturally and socially appropriate manner, the teacher should react to the content of the message successfully conveyed before commending the student for his or her achievement as a language learner.

Explanation about what happened in the contextualized exercises may be provided in the language students understand most readily—English, in most American high school classrooms. However, the teacher must be careful not to spend too much time using English at the expense of time for interaction in Japanese.

6.4 Use mechanical drills appropriately.

Whenever contextualized exercises break down because of students' lack of mechanical facility, drills are needed before going on with the exercise. Mechanical drills include simple repetition of a model and manipulation of forms with

concern for meaning at the word or sentence level. These are basically vocabulary practice and exercises of motor skills for producing the given sequence of sounds with appropriate timing at normal speed.

Some mechanical drills are necessary when new forms are first introduced. If the students do homework assignments, many of these drills can be done using tapes and other technological study aids outside of class in preparation for more contextualized exercises with the teacher, but some must be done in class. Whether the drills are done as homework or in class, care should be taken to make them meaningful. That is, students should know the meaning of what they are hearing and saying, even if they are not at the moment practicing the exchanges as part of social interaction.

Repetition of a model is a typical mechanical drill. When the sequence practiced is long, reverse buildup is useful. In this, the last coherent unit of a sentence is practiced first.* Units of structure and meaning are added one at a time, moving backwards from the predicate to the beginning of the sentence. For example, the sequence **Ototoi kara byōki de gakkō o yasunde imasu kedo** '[He] has been out sick from school since the day before yesterday, but . . . ' can be practiced through the repetition of (1) **yasunde imasu kedo**, (2) **gakkō o yasunde imasu kedo**, (3) **byōki de gakkō o yasunde imasu kedo**, and finally (4) **Ototoi kara byōki de gakkō o yasunde imasu kedo**. This kind of repetition practice is more desirable than word buildup from the front, because intonation patterns and sound features are kept constant throughout the repetitions, and the phrases at each step are meaningful in their own right. For the mechanical repetition practice to be effective, the model must be repeated a number of times.

Response drills are also mechanical, but they require more mental processes than simple repetition. The student must first understand what is being said by the interlocutor and then respond with the appropriate form. If a correction of the student's response is made, the entire exchange—not just the response portion—must be repeated for additional practice.**

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* A unit such as **sō ja arimasen** cannot be separated into **sō** and **ja arimasen**, because **ja arimasen** is not meaningful by itself.

** The low-high accent of words like **kore** and **sore**, for example, can be difficult for some beginners. It is relatively easy to correct the accent in isolated sentences such as **Kore desu** '[It] is this [one]', but in response to **Dore desu ka** 'Which [one] is [it]?' (where the first word, **dore**, has high-low accent) students need to think ahead and not accent **kore** incorrectly.

Whether the activity is mechanical or heavily contextualized and communicative, no more than five to ten minutes should be spent on a single activity. Students' concentration span is short, especially when the activity is mechanical.

6.5 Provide practice for both interactive and noninteractive listening.

Listening may be divided into two types, interactive and noninteractive, with each type having special pedagogical requirements.

INTERACTIVE listening skill is required in order to participate in a conversation. It can be practiced (or tested) only through conversations—that is, when teacher-student or student-student exchanges occur in Japanese. The more Japanese all the participants use in and outside of class, the greater the opportunity for the students to gain skills in interactive listening. This kind of listening can also be practiced by using variations of memorized conversations.

NONINTERACTIVE listening skill is required in order to interpret a conversation as an uninvolved bystander or to understand a prepared speech. It can be practiced using recorded materials. The objectives of noninteractive listening include identifying the type of speech (e.g., different kinds of radio programs), scanning for a specific piece of information (e.g., tomorrow's weather), understanding the gist of a message ("skimming"), or gathering detailed information. Classroom practice in noninteractive listening should reflect these different kinds of purposes. One way to reinforce this skill is to hold each member of the class accountable for the comprehension of all Japanese conversations he or she hears. This can be accomplished, for example, by asking those who heard but did not participate in a conversation questions about its content. This technique is particularly effective in a large class, as it increases the incentive for students to pay attention.

7. Understand differences among students. (Assumption VIII)

Students vary in terms of their previous experiences and native abilities. Previous experience determines, at least in part, such factors as motivation, expectations about and experience in language learning, knowledge of Japanese language and culture, and worldview.

Students study languages for a variety of reasons. Their motivations range from wanting a different type of intellectual exercise to skill development for occupational interest. But as reported in a national survey of Japanese instruction in this country, the majority of them place heavy emphasis on wanting to learn

to speak.* Teachers should be sensitive to students' reasons for studying Japanese and should try to reflect them in the curriculum design. Sometimes students take Japanese because their parents are ambitious about their children's future career development. If this is the only reason students bring to the Japanese program, the teacher should try to help them find their own reasons for studying Japanese in orientation and in subsequent instruction. In the end, however, motivation should not override principles and assumptions pertaining to foreign language teaching. Games, skits, and other activities that are primarily useful for increasing motivation should be used with circumspection.

Different students also use different learning strategies.** Part of the responsibility of the teacher is to manage different learning strategies and to foster those that are most effective for the goals of the students and of the program.

8. Create an optimum learning environment. (Assumption IX)

8.1 Create a physical setting conducive to learning.

Classrooms differ in a number of respects: size, type of furniture, whether or not they are used exclusively for Japanese instruction, and the availability of Japan-related decorations, reference books, audiotape and videocassette recorders, or computers. All these details have an effect on the learning and teaching environment. So far as it is possible, it is desirable to have a "Japanese room" in which realia and posters depicting Japan create a "Japanese" environment.

It is important not to be bound by the ordinary location of the tables and chairs. Depending on the activity, furniture can be moved to create a proper setting. The standard lecture format of teacher in front facing rows of students should be avoided, if possible. This format does not promote interactivity, and it allows some students to hide, others to dominate. If chairs are bolted to the floor, as they are in some classrooms, teachers and students must move around whenever appropriate and useful.

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* Jorden and Lambert 1991.

** Available studies of learning strategies are concerned with English as a second language (Rubin 1981) or the study of European languages by native speakers of English (Naiman et al. 1978). The results may not apply directly to the learning of Japanese by American students.

The number of students in a class also affects the classroom environment. For optimum development of productive and interactional abilities, classes should be small—no more than fifteen students, and ideally between four and eight. But the reality of most schools renders this optimum classroom configuration an impossibility. Nevertheless, the ideal should be kept in mind, especially by administrators, as it suggests where flexibility and creativity can pay dividends. For example, it may well be worth occasionally dividing a class in two and meeting with each half for half the length of a normal period.

8.2 Acknowledge students' base culture.

Students' cultural backgrounds must be considered. There are aspects of American culture that are particularly different from Japanese culture. The instructor should have a good knowledge of where the students are coming from.* In addition, while it is important to have a general idea of both "American culture" and "Japanese culture," it is also crucially important to be aware of the individual personalities and backgrounds of the students. This information will enable the teacher to be proactive in relating to the various needs of students.

8.3 Encourage dynamic interaction.

As much as possible, class time should be devoted to realistic interaction, in Japanese, among students. The large class sizes prevalent in American foreign language classrooms present a problem in this area; the techniques that are commonly used to counteract it—group work, choral work, and the like—cannot be as readily or as efficiently applied to instruction in a "truly foreign" language, like Japanese, as to instruction in a "cognate" language of Europe.

Group work, such as pair work and group discussion, generally increases the amount of practice in the target language. Care must be taken, however, to provide a well-planned practice session that minimizes the chance of reinforcing incorrect forms. As already remarked, this is best done by ensuring that correct models are introduced first and that the teacher has an opportunity to monitor students' initial performance before group work starts.

Choral work is useful for increasing the amount of time students spend vocalizing, and for decreasing nervousness or embarrassment about doing new

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* In particular, an increasingly large number of students are coming from base cultures in Latin America and Asia; the number of children of intercultural marriages is also on the rise.

things alone in front of others. At the same time, it is important to remember that choral work alone is neither realistic nor an effective means of learning to interact in Japanese. Students do not learn to speak by participating in choral repetition or response practice only, nor can individual errors be corrected during choral work.

Creating dynamic interaction is particularly hard to achieve when instruction is delivered via satellite. A system by which the small subgroups of students who receive the satellite program are monitored, either locally or centrally, can be devised to help lessen the limitations of such a program. In satellite programs it is important to train the students to do much of the learning on their own, using study aid materials. Use of systems for testing and evaluation should be fully explored.

8.4 Use games carefully.

Games can be used to practice both speaking and listening.* Games provide a structured situation in which students offer or seek particular kinds of information in a realistic context. They usually allow for maximum participation by students.

Games should be selected carefully so that their objectives can also apply to out-of-game realistic contexts of information exchange (e.g., Monopoly™). Such real-world contexts should be applied when playing the selected game. For example, the game of finding a person in a group who has the same personal preferences as oneself can be put into the larger real-life context of trying to find a housemate. Games that are useful in this respect are role-playing and simulation types. Skits and film making that require students to create an extensive script in Japanese should be treated differently. While they may be instrumental in raising motivation, they are also likely to encourage the repeated practice of forms that are not useful or are actually inaccurate. Games should also be used carefully to match what students have learned. Playing games takes time. If possible—for example, if they are available on computer—they are best done as an out-of-class activity.

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* See McGuiness, Nakayama, and Yao 1991 for examples of games that can be used in Japanese language classrooms.

9. Use different types of feedback appropriately, and give adequate correction. (Assumption VIII)

The ultimate test of foreign language mastery is a student's performance in the field. If a conversation is going well, beyond the initial flattering phrases, the best signal of success is communication that does not break down. It follows that in a contextualized exercise that involves an extended conversation, the most positive feedback is to keep the conversation going. In order to keep the thread of conversation, explicit positive feedback should be reserved until later.

Conversely, allowing a breakdown in conversation conveys the message that a student's utterance did not serve the intention of its uttering. When the student has had an opportunity to recover, and if he or she is unable to self-correct, the teacher should provide explicit correction.

Excessive correction is discouraging to the student, but untrained target-native teachers tend to correct too little because of misplaced concern for the feelings of the student. This tendency is even stronger when the partner is obviously a beginning student of the language. Unless students are given sufficient correction in class by their teachers, they will miss the chance to learn appropriate forms and continue to practice erroneous Japanese. The longer they keep practicing the wrong forms, the harder it will be to change them later, when students realize the error. Again, the fact that Japanese is not at all like English must be considered. Although the development of self-improvement skills should be a high priority for advanced students nearing the end of formal instruction, beginning students are not equipped to correct their own errors "naturally," and teachers should not assume that they are.

The key is to avoid any hint of condemnation or sarcasm when giving corrections, yet not to refrain from making corrections out of fear of discouraging students. Students are in fact critical of teachers who do not correct.

10. Evaluate students on their daily activities. (Assumption V)

Evaluation of speaking ability involves having students speak. This may be done through daily interaction with the students. The criteria for the evaluation should include factors that determine the quality of communicative appropriateness, contextual relevance, delivery, content, and accuracy. Some judgments are necessarily subjective as a rating of the interaction itself. (See Chapter 1 for a full discussion of evaluation procedures.)

11. Teach strategies for acquisition only after the foundation has been established. (Assumptions I, III, V, and VII)

Once students are at ease with basic patterns, they should be trained to cope with new linguistic expressions and new social situations utilizing the Japanese they have already learned.* This development of strategies is important when learning a language such as Japanese that requires a far greater amount of time than the commonly taught European languages.

Students come to the Japanese classroom with limited strategies. Many approach the learning of language, a task in which skill development is central, in the same manner as they approach the study of history, a task in which it is peripheral. Also, the vast cultural and linguistic differences between Japanese and English often create a type of learning "dissonance" among students. Japanese has little in common with anything they have ever learned. Consequently, much teacher time must be spent at the beginning providing emotional support, new learning models, and the essential mind-set for learning Japanese; later, students should be trained to improve their Japanese language skills by themselves after they leave the classroom through observation, the use of artifacts, and interaction with Japanese who are not trained language teachers.

12. Recognize the strengths and limitations of different types of teachers. (Assumption X)

Most teachers of Japanese in secondary education are the only Japanese teacher in the school or district. Many of them are base natives—native speakers of American English who share American cultural values with their students. Many college teachers of Japanese are target natives—native speakers with a Japanese cultural background. A few are native speakers of a language other than English or Japanese (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese).

Whether or not teachers are native speakers of Japanese, the crucial consideration is whether they have the ability to teach that language in a given school. At the very least, they should have the ability to use Japanese accurately and communicatively. They should also have basic linguistic and cultural knowledge of Japanese, and be equipped to facilitate learning by the students. It is also

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* This is the exception to the recommendation of using only forms introduced systematically.

important to be aware of the relative strengths and limitations of target- and base-native teachers.

12.1 Teachers who are not native speakers of Japanese were once students themselves.

To the extent that they do not give misinformation by modeling inappropriate language use, teachers who are not native speakers of Japanese should try to interact with their students in Japanese. However, unless they are highly competent in Japanese, non-native teachers should rely heavily on the recorded Japanese of native speakers as the model. This does not mean using a satellite dish that captures television programs broadcast primarily for native Japanese. In the elementary stage of instruction an overwhelming use of such artifacts can be counterproductive. Rather, audio and video recordings prepared for the gradual and systematic introduction of Japanese should be used. Non-native instructors are responsible for the careful screening of such materials to make sure that they represent the most appropriate topics and order of presentation, speed, clarity, and so on.

Teachers who are not native speakers of Japanese are better equipped than native speakers to guide students along the path of learning. Their experience as learners of Japanese is something no native Japanese teacher has experienced. Their own competence in Japanese determines the extent to which they can be a linguistic and behavioral model for their students. Teachers who are not target-native speakers, and whose training in the Japanese language does not extend beyond what most American colleges and universities offer on their campuses, are limited in this capacity. At the very least, however, even minimally trained base-native teachers of Japanese can provide useful direction to help their students perform, even if they themselves are not the perfect model. (The best teachers of concert pianists are not necessarily themselves concert pianists!) That many students ultimately surpass their teachers should be no cause for alarm.

12.2 Target-native teachers have never studied Japanese as a foreign language.

Teachers who are native speakers of Japanese are best equipped to demonstrate authentic language use, providing a native model for students. Their experience as natives is something that no non-native teacher has experienced. They must be careful not to make their speech unnatural in an attempt to make it "easier" for foreigners. For example, voiced and devoiced vowels are different sounds,

but they are not perceived as different by native speakers of Japanese. When these teachers slow down, they face the danger of presenting something very different from what they would present at normal speed, without realizing that the difference exists. Target-native teachers should not be the sole model of language and behavior but should also use recorded materials to provide a broader exposure. Since they do not share the full range of their students' cultural background, they should be careful not to make assumptions about the students' behavior based on their own upbringing.

Many target natives have received education in the United States. If they have not lost their ability to use Japanese to interact with other Japanese, with some training they can become very effective teachers, because they are able to provide good linguistic and behavioral models, and at the same time they possess a personal understanding of the base culture.

Some target natives have been trained in the United States specifically to teach Japanese as a foreign language in American schools. These individuals tend to be more successful than those who have received training only in Japan, even if the training was for teaching Japanese outside the country.

It is important to note that native speakers of Japanese should not be expected to be effective as teachers of Japanese just because they are native speakers.

12.3 Consider the ideal of team teaching.

Ideally, instruction should be offered by a team of teachers, one a target native and one a base native, with each doing what he or she is uniquely able to do. Even if this is not feasible in a single school, provided that the district offers Japanese in several of its schools, teachers can share responsibilities in several schools within the district. Target-native teachers can focus on practicing language use, while the base-native teachers can focus on relating the language to the students' background. This involves flexible scheduling of teaching hours so as to permit at least some of the instructors to teach in more than one school.

If practice classes taught by the target-native teacher strive to incorporate more contextualized exercises than mechanical drills, then these classes will usually require a greater amount of preparation time than the information delivery and coaching class taught by the base-native teacher. The gap in preparation time can be compensated for by one or both of the following actions: (1) have base-native teachers take greater administrative responsibilities; (2) have them teach a greater number of classes. In the second option the base-native

teacher may teach three levels while the target-native teacher teaches only one level.* Students in a single class should have more practice hours than information/coaching hours.

Many impediments stand in the way of implementing team teaching in both precollegiate and postsecondary schools. These include budgets, state law, union contracts, and tenure and promotion procedures. Even if it is not possible to establish a base- and target-native team, however, it is important to understand why this is an ideal configuration of human resources. Solo teachers and administrators can use it as a tool for better planning, troubleshooting existing programs, and prioritizing budget requests.

13. Include teacher certification in long-term planning. (Assumptions III, V, IX, and X)

Securing teachers who are qualified as teachers of Japanese and certified as teachers in the public education system is a challenge for school administrators. In many states certification requirements for teachers of Japanese have not yet been drawn up. Before starting a Japanese program, schools and districts should consider carefully whether they have access to teachers who have sufficient training and competence in Japanese as well as certification for the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language to Americans.

Some districts hire temporary teachers who are not required to have certification. For example, they may employ a Japanese who has been sent to America by a governmental or private agency in Japan. As an emergency measure, this is fine. It is not, however, the way to build a program that will deliver consistent, quality instruction from year to year.

Some schools have tried to have their certified teachers of other languages (e.g., French, Spanish) learn Japanese, so that they can teach in a newly established program. The inadequacy of their Japanese competence causes serious problems.

Clearly, it is important that a program consistently offer high-quality instruction, and this can be done only with qualified teachers and a long-term commitment. Though there may be temporary "fixes" that are viable, it is preferable to launch a program with a teacher who is both a specialist and

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* Such strategies are clearly dependent on the number of levels or sections available and may very well be determined by the nature of the union contract with the district.

permanent. Certification is an area that requires serious attention throughout the United States. Requirements for Japanese cannot be closely modeled on those established for Spanish and French, for example, because of the intrinsic difficulty of the language for Americans.

Given that training and certification programs lag behind actual need, administrators will have to recruit carefully. It will be in the long-term interest of schools and school districts to find well-qualified, well-trained, and certified teachers before launching a program. In the absence of such teachers, schools can still offer enrichment courses in which facts about Japanese society, language, history, and art are taught in English. Such courses will almost certainly include such basic Japanese concepts as **giri** and **on**, for which there are no simple equivalents in English; nevertheless, they should not for that reason be labeled or regarded as language courses.

One way to deal with the shortage of Japanese teachers in high schools is to arrange to have juniors and seniors study Japanese at a local college, provided that the college offers a sound program in Japanese. How to grant credit for the study has to be worked out in each case. Even with the logistical complications involved, this is a more desirable approach than haphazard implementation of inferior programs in the high school.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The twenty-first century is bound to be marked by dramatically increased interaction between the United States and Japar.. Accordingly, educators will face a greater responsibility for ensuring that Americans are capable of participating in intercultural dialogue with their Japanese counterparts. Instruction in Japanese cannot be successful without concern for the cultural setting within which the language is used—language IN culture.

An introductory Japanese program provides only a small part of what learners will eventually gain in their lifelong learning of the language. However, this early stage of formal study is of crucial importance, because it is here that a learner's attitudes about Japanese language and culture, as well as about the learning of Japanese, will be formed. The implementation of Japanese programs should be firmly grounded in explicit programmatic goals—goals that have a reasonable chance of being attained, given local conditions, and that are closely related to the long-term learning experiences students will have after they leave the program.

At the risk of oversimplification, we offer this executive summary for the convenience of readers more concerned with administrative policy recommendations than with the linguistic and pedagogical rationale underlying them.

— Set realistic goals. Precollegiate curricula can only be a beginning in a lifelong learning process. Articulation with postsecondary curricula is essential.

— Japanese is a truly foreign language, not just "hard French." The precedents and practices associated with commonly taught foreign languages do not, in general, carry over to Japanese.

— Equal emphasis on the "four skills"—listening, speaking, reading, writing—in early Japanese instruction is inadvisable. The written language should be introduced only after students have a foundation in the spoken language.

- Developing familiarity with grammatical patterns and the rules of Japanese social interaction is more important than building vocabulary in the early stages of spoken language learning.
- When used as a pedagogical transcription for the spoken language, romanization is a useful visual reminder of pronunciation and should not be shunned.
- For teaching spoken Japanese to American students, the Japanese writing system as it is taught to Japanese children is not the proper medium of instruction.
- Team teaching, in which a native speaker of Japanese and a native speaker of English work side by side, is the ideal against which other configurations of resources should be measured.
- When available textbooks are less than satisfactory, teachers should concentrate on taking steps in the classroom to make up for the deficiencies, not spend time writing new materials from scratch.
- There is no substitute for properly trained teachers. The use of computer programs and other technology cannot replace interaction with a trained teacher but must be integrated into a fundamentally sound curriculum.
- Do not confuse learned culture with language. Time spent on learning about Japan and its traditional civilization is time not spent on the development of linguistic skills. Do not expect to have history, the arts, and the like covered in language classes. Instead, develop support courses in these subjects separately.
- To maximize the chances of success for the largest number of students, keep class sizes small, hire properly trained teachers, and give students adequate time for practicing the language itself.

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